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Calle

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(54) **FENCE SUPPORT SYSTEM**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

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E04H 17/06 (2006.01)
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F16B 5/06 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **E04H 17/06** (2013.01); **E04H 17/161** (2013.01); **F16B 5/0664** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC E04H 17/04; E04H 17/06; E04H 17/10; E04H 17/02; E01F 7/02; E01F 7/025; E01F 7/04; E01F 7/045; E01F 7/00

See application file for complete search history.

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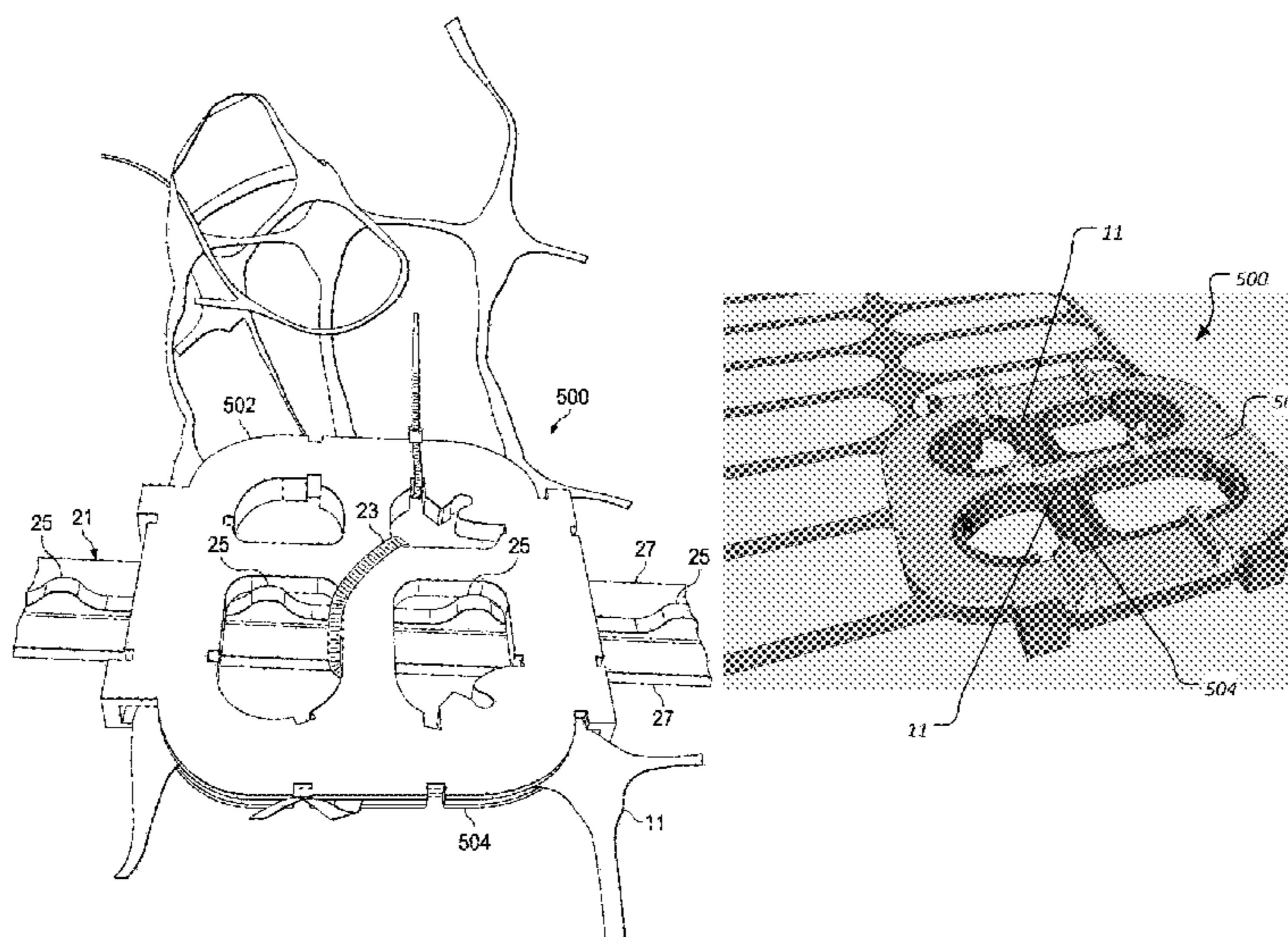
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A fence support system includes a catch member having an at least partially D-shaped protrusion and post receiver, and a retainer member having an aperture configured to receive the protrusion. A method of supporting an apertured fence material includes providing a catch member comprising an at least partially D-shaped protrusion extending from a catch plate of the catch member and receiving an end of a vertical support within the catch member, providing a retainer member comprising an aperture configured to receive the protrusion of the catch member, and capturing an apertured fence material between the catch member and the retainer member.

5 Claims, 27 Drawing Sheets



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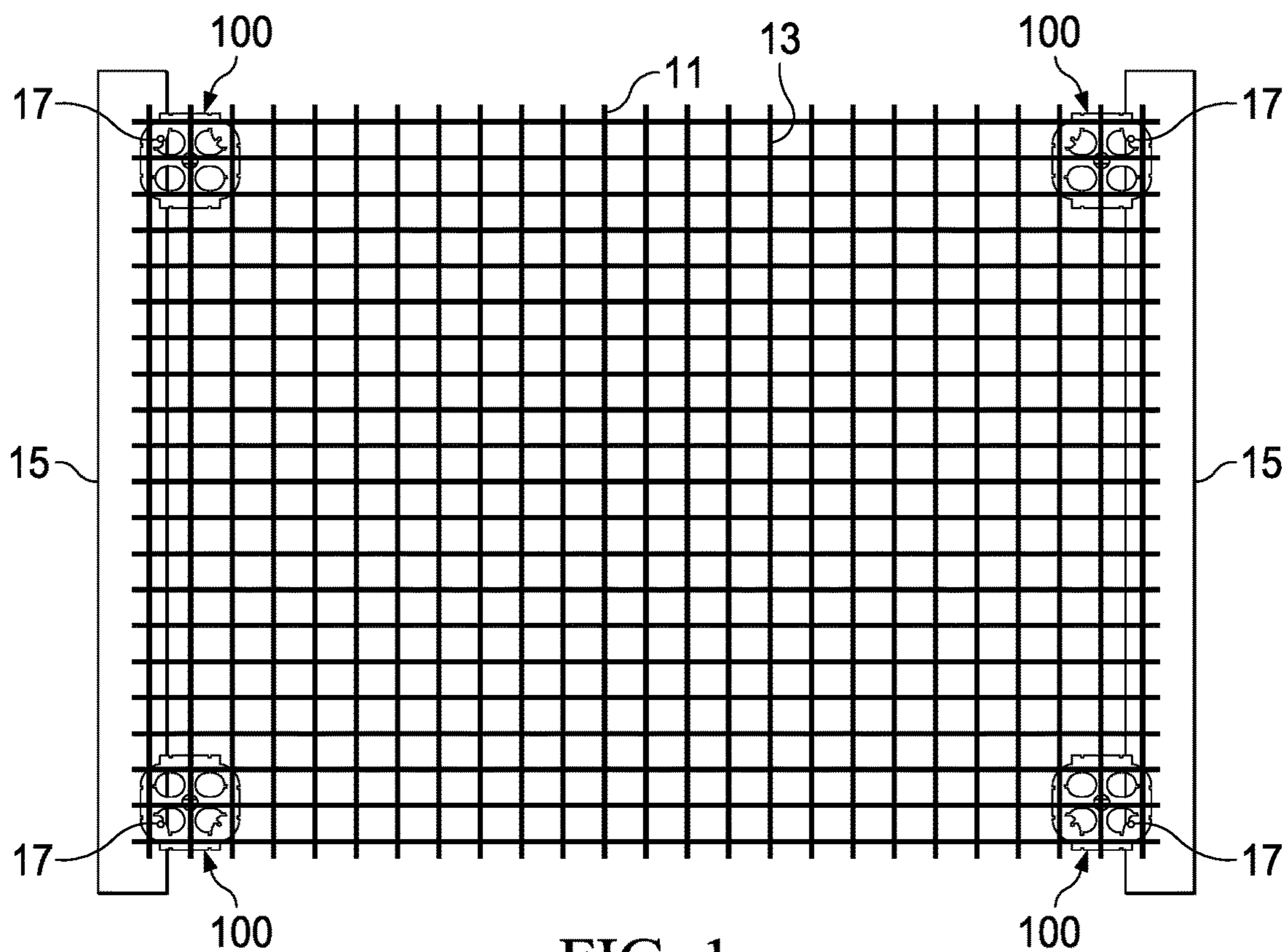


FIG. 1

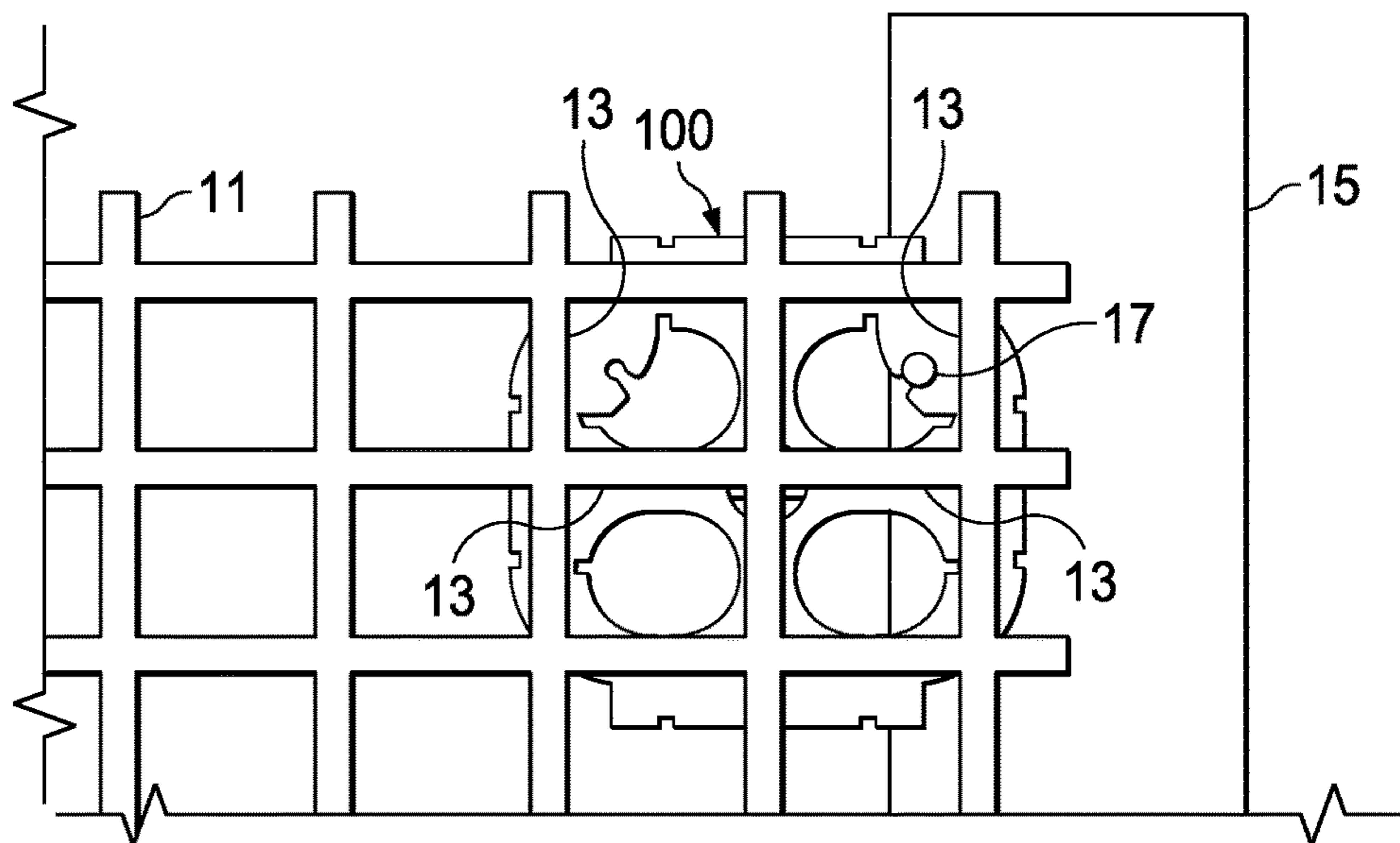


FIG. 2

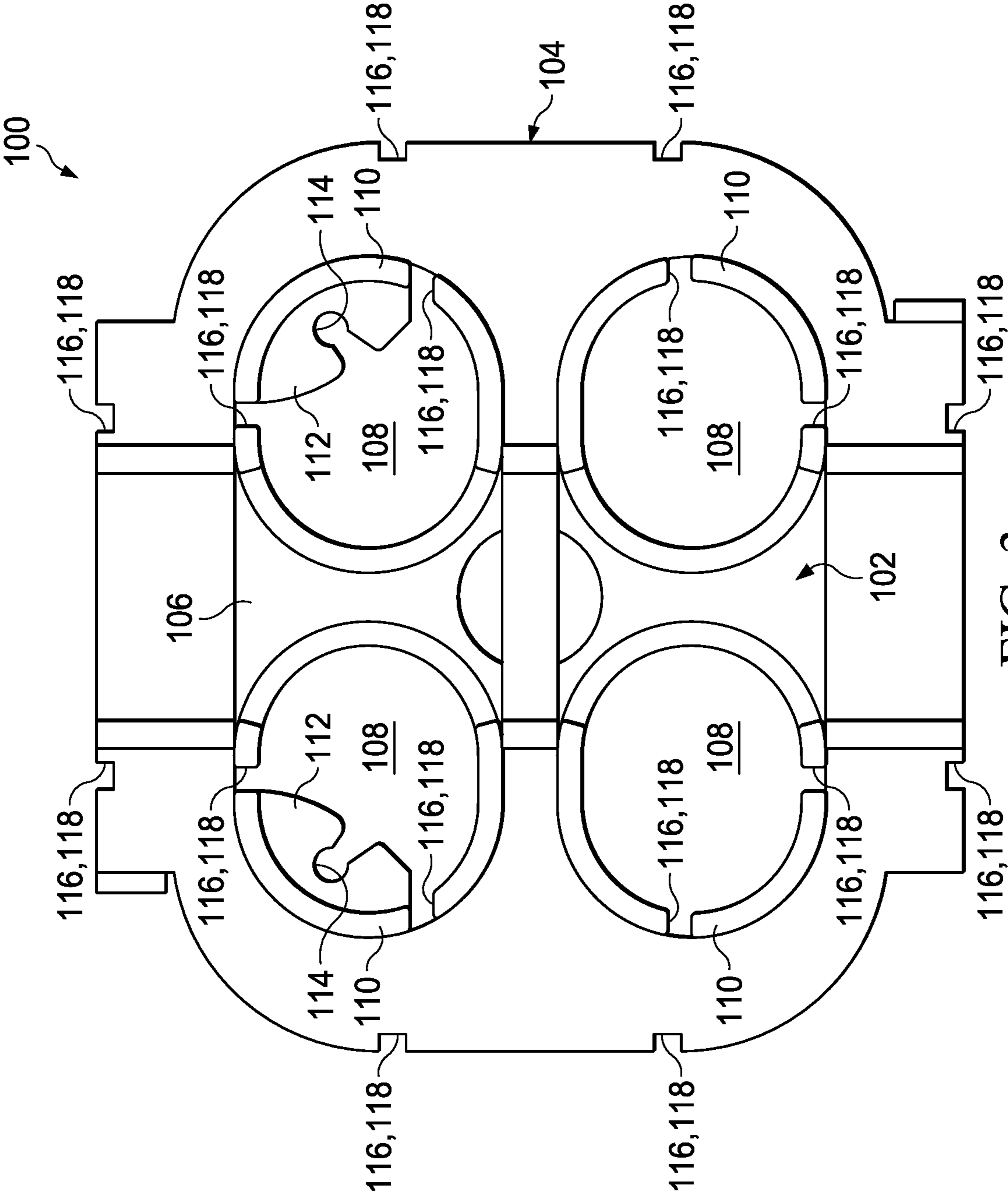


FIG. 3

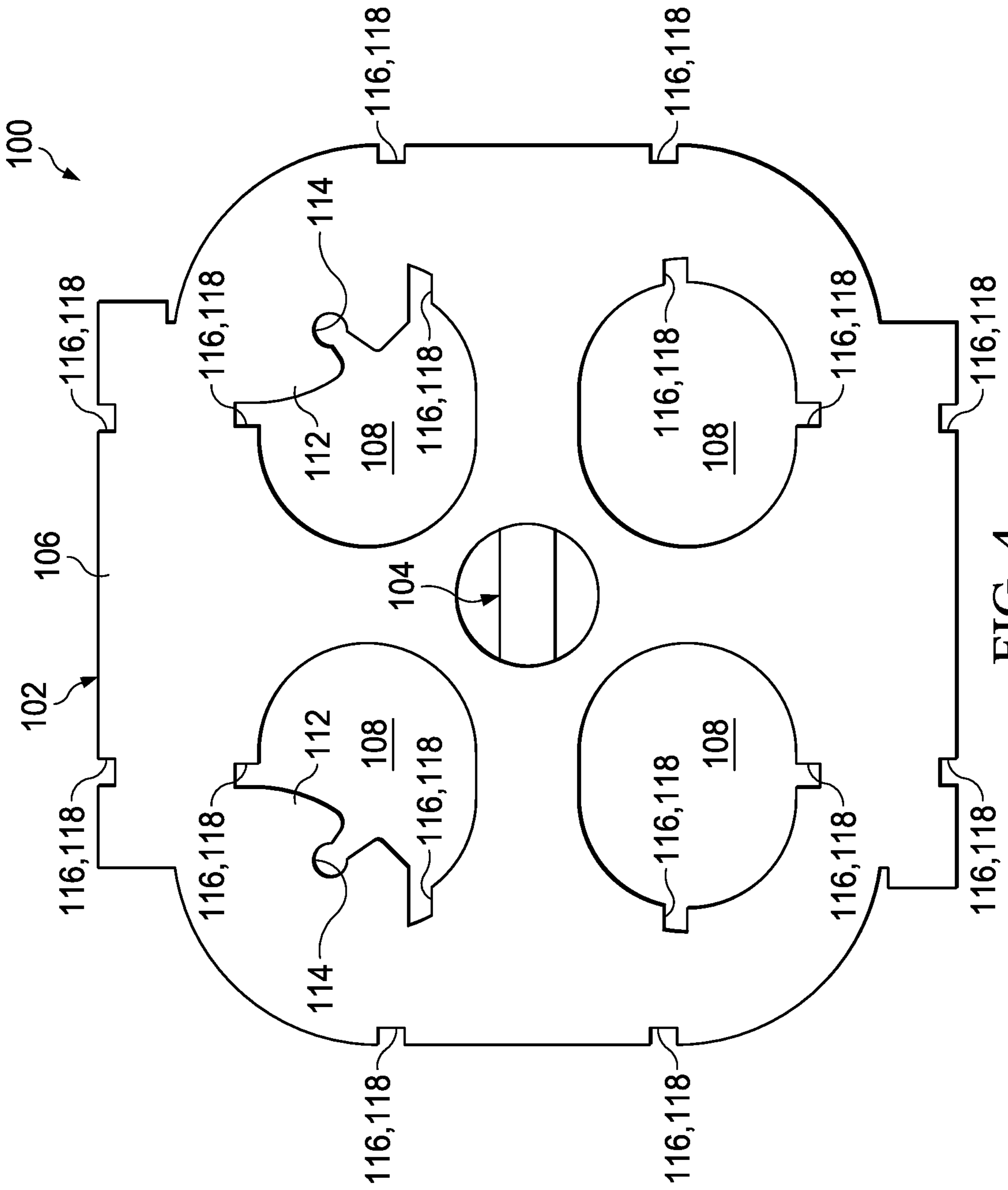


FIG. 4

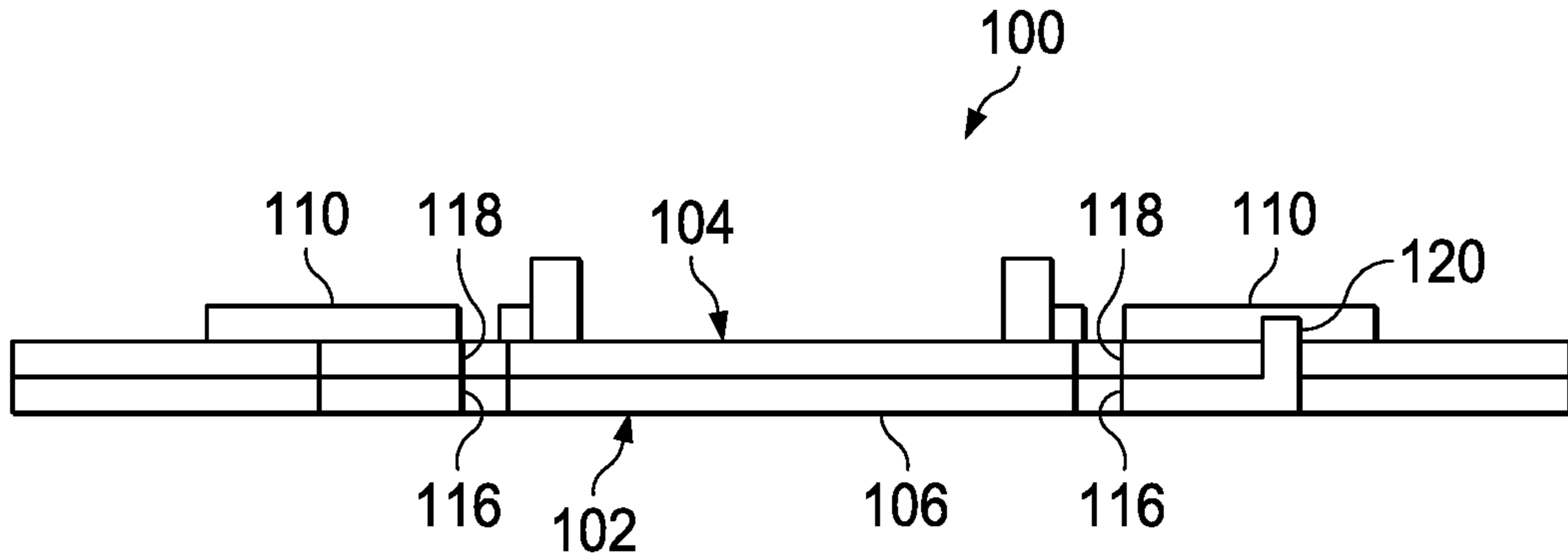


FIG. 5

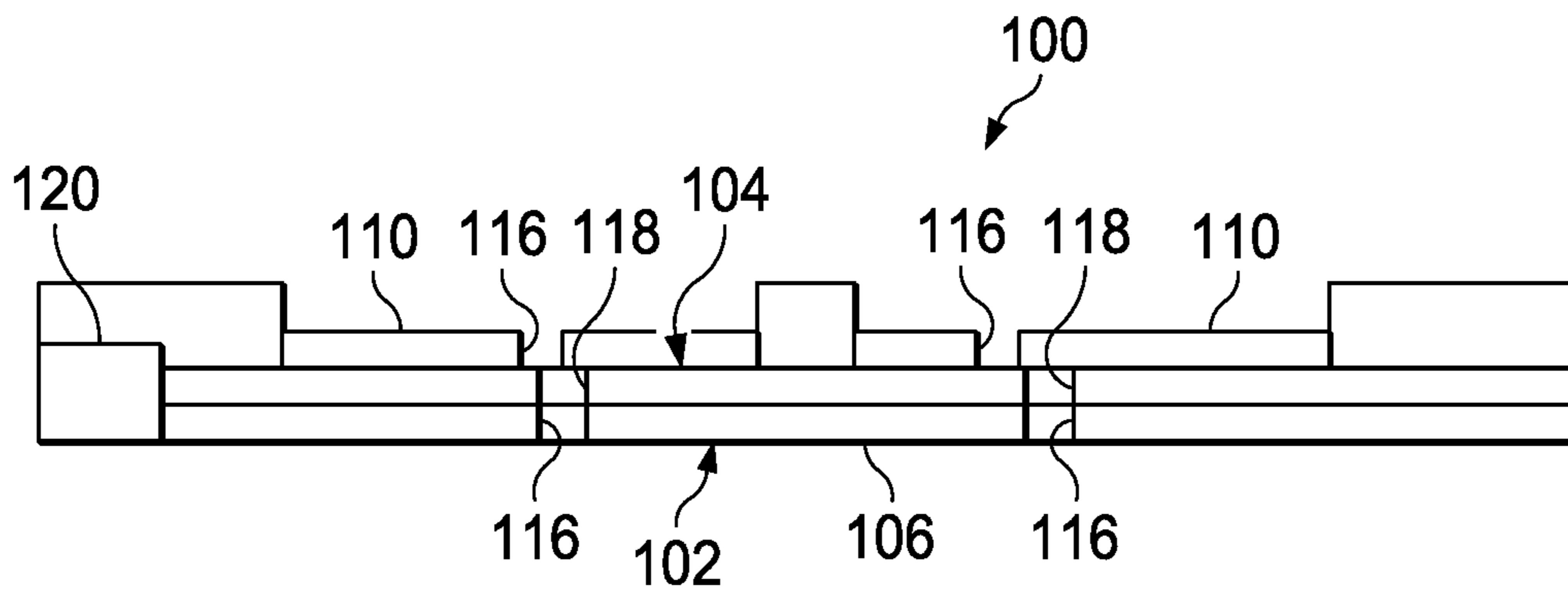
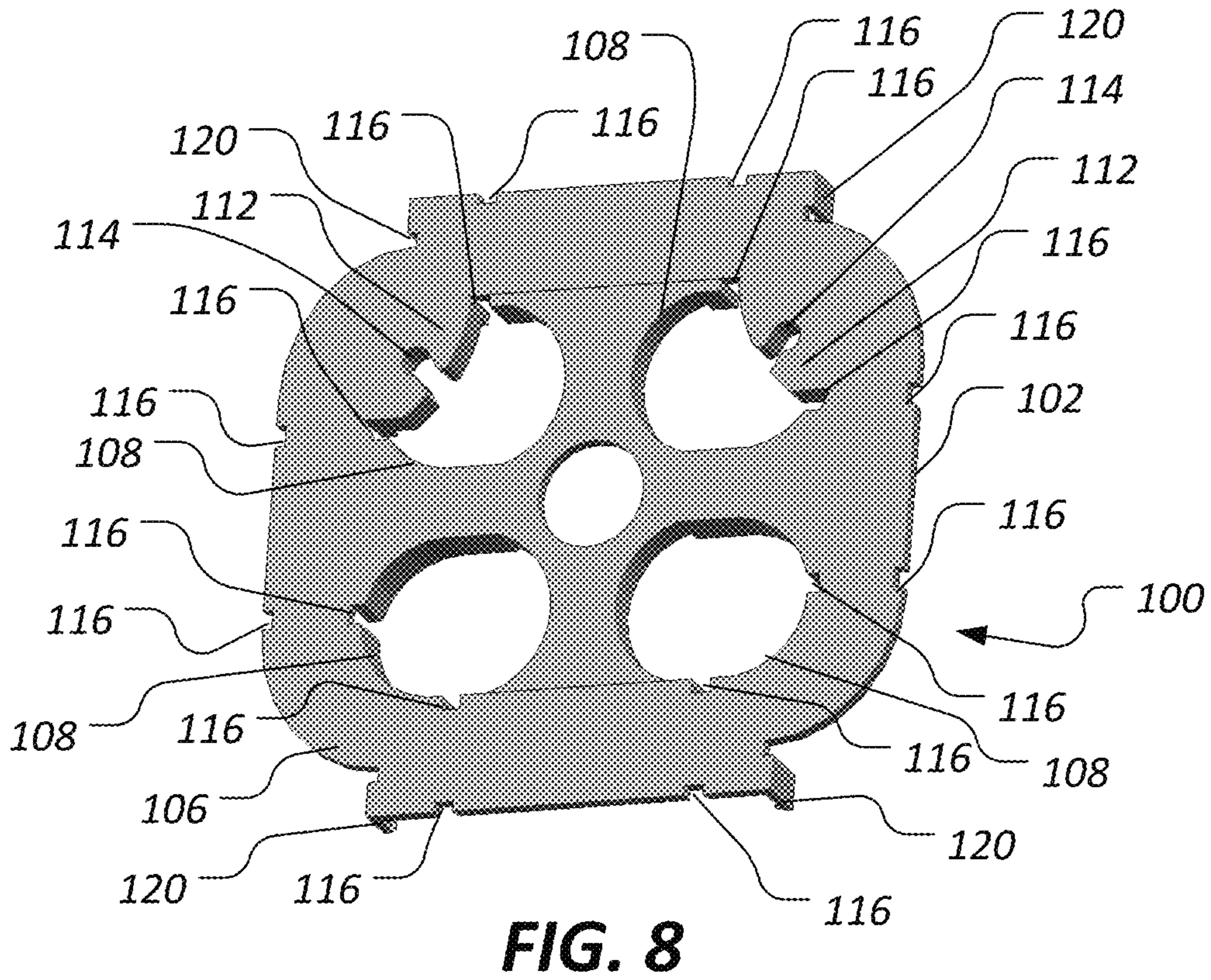
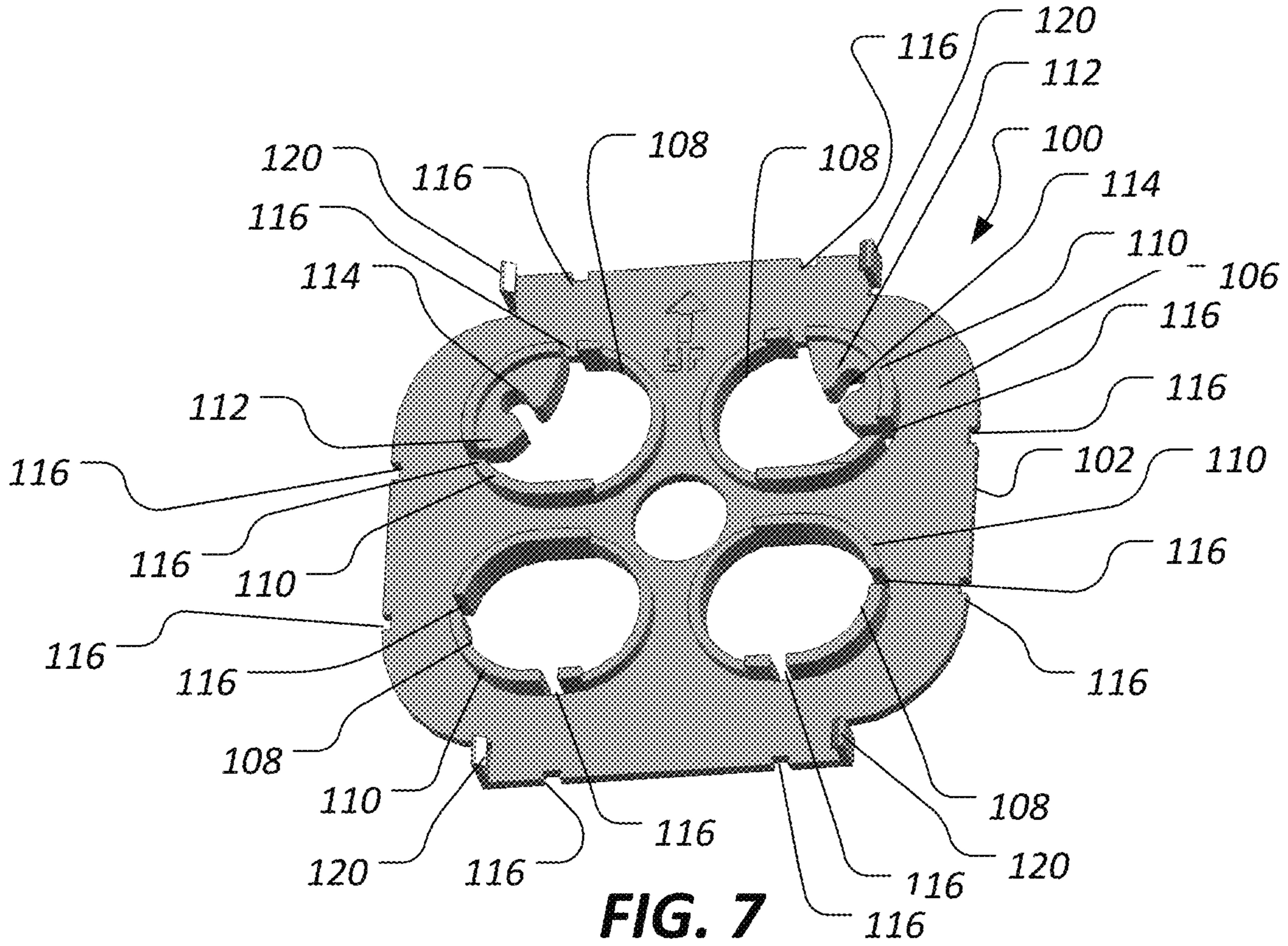


FIG. 6



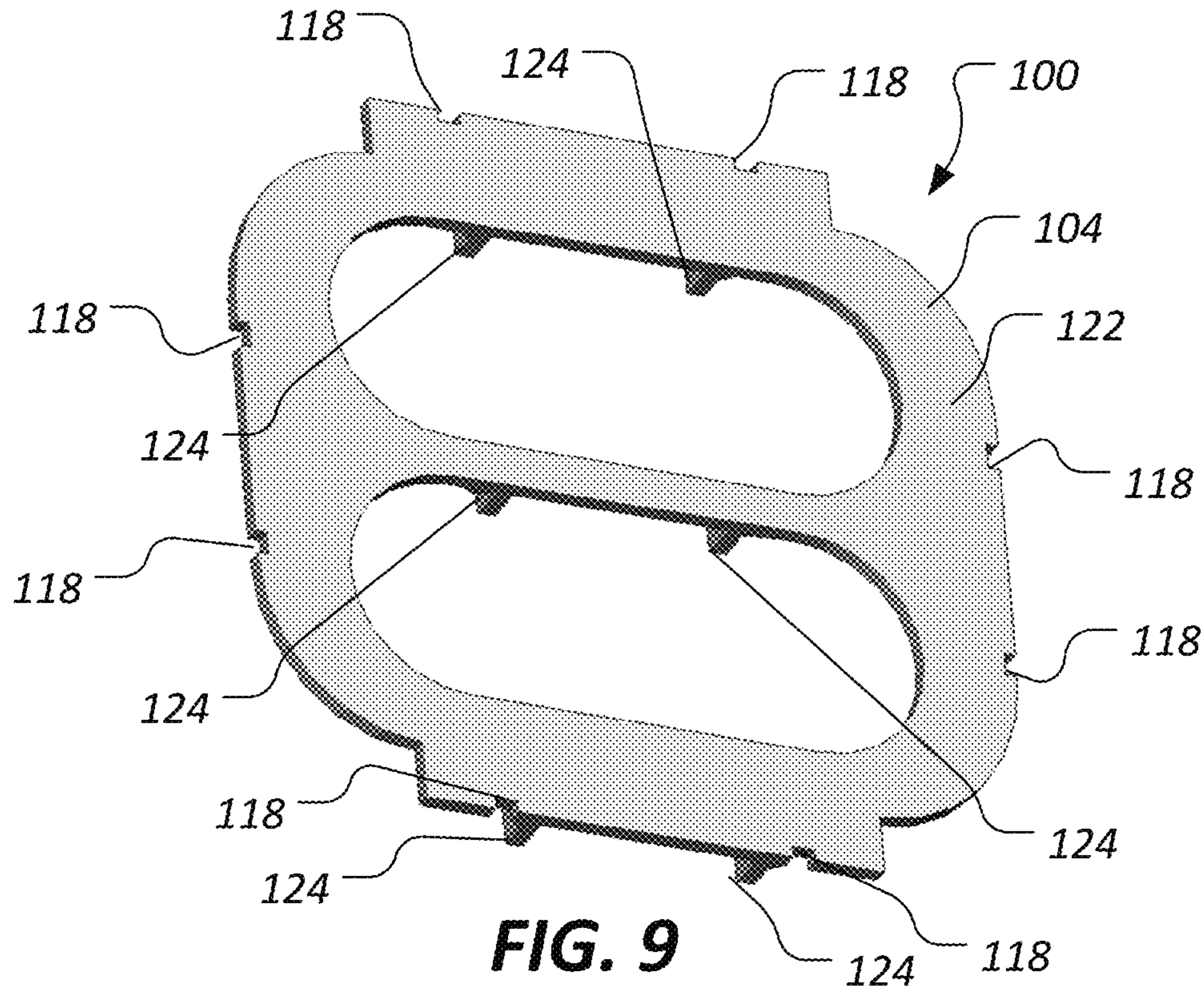


FIG. 9

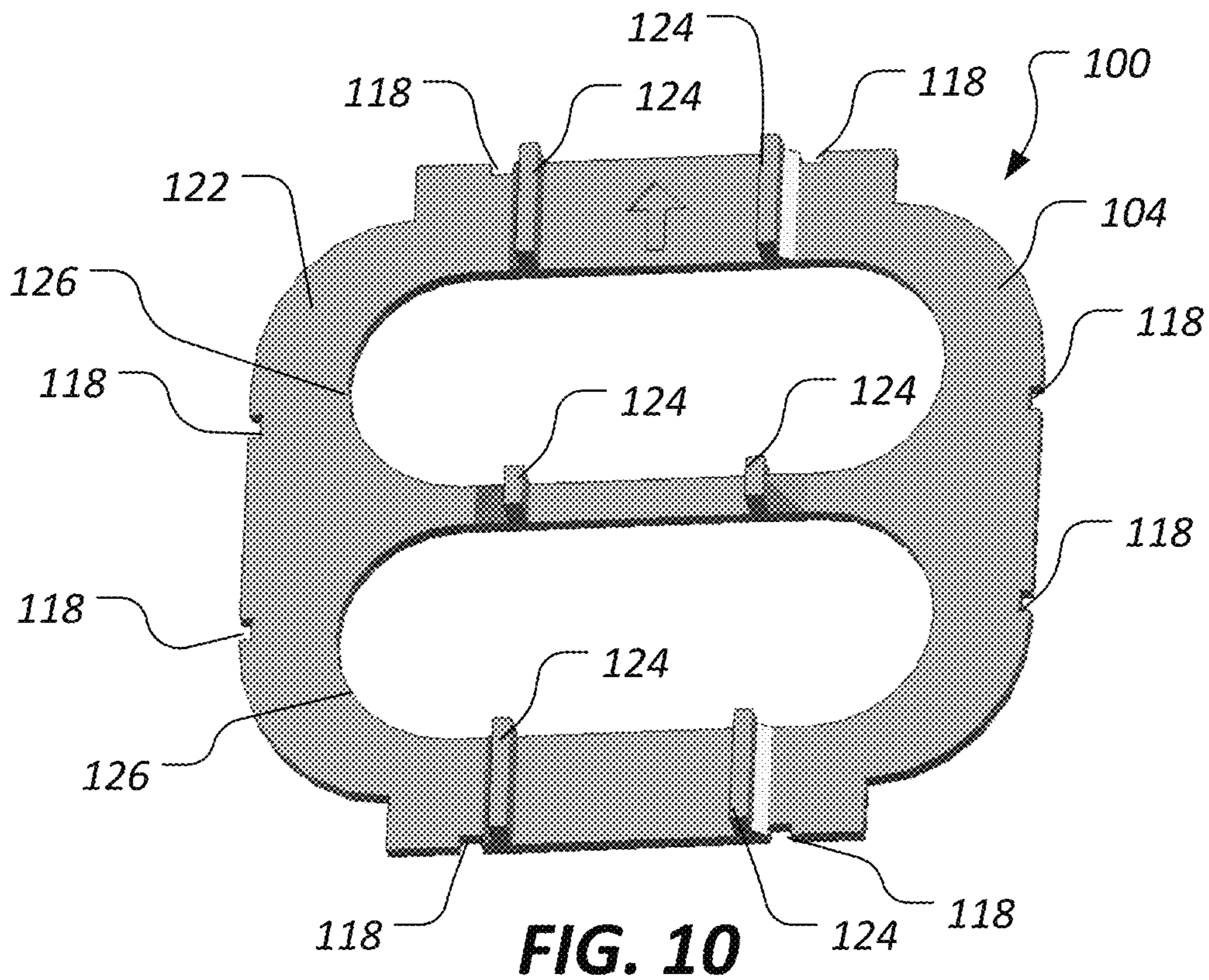


FIG. 10

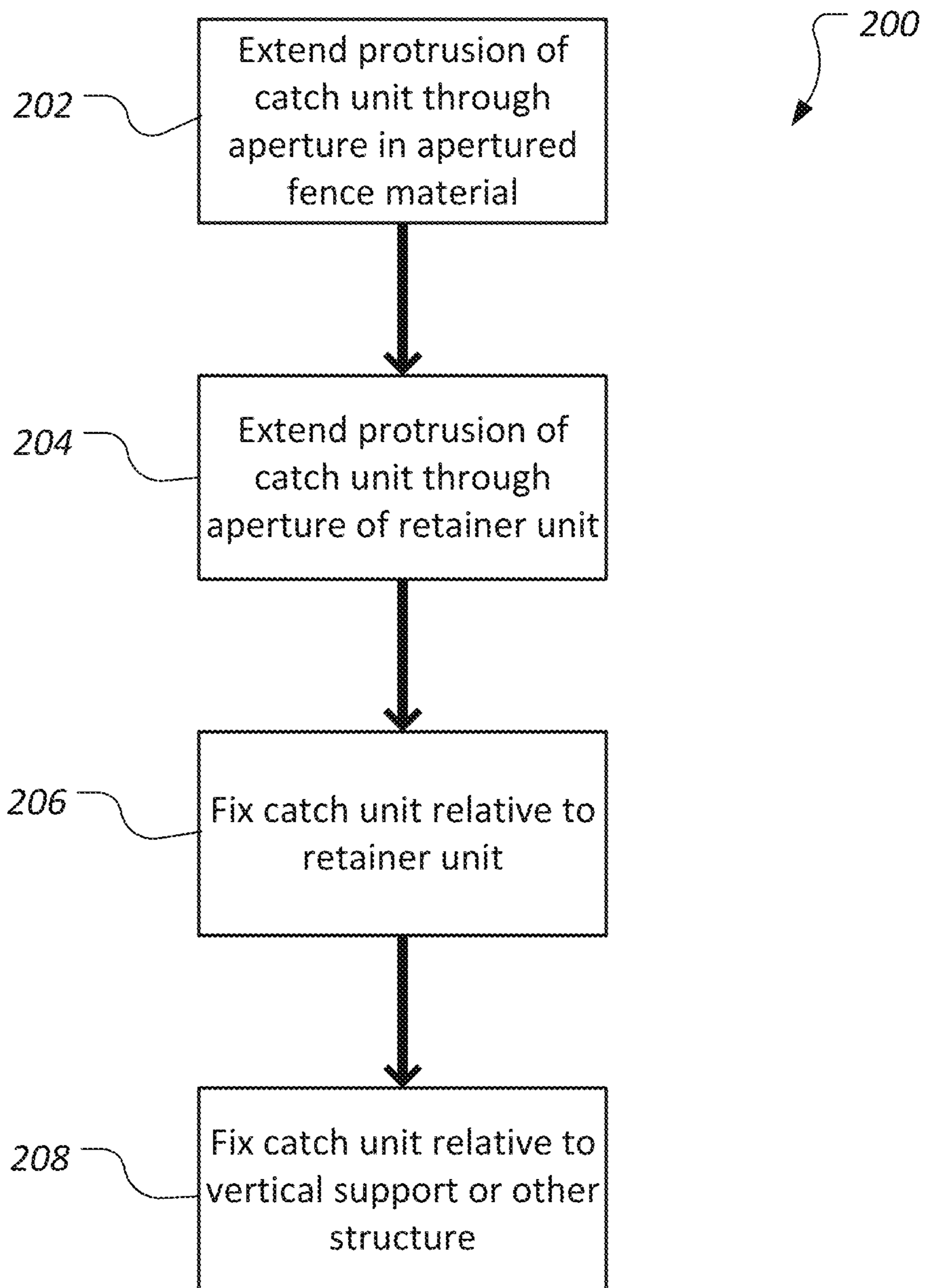


FIG. 11

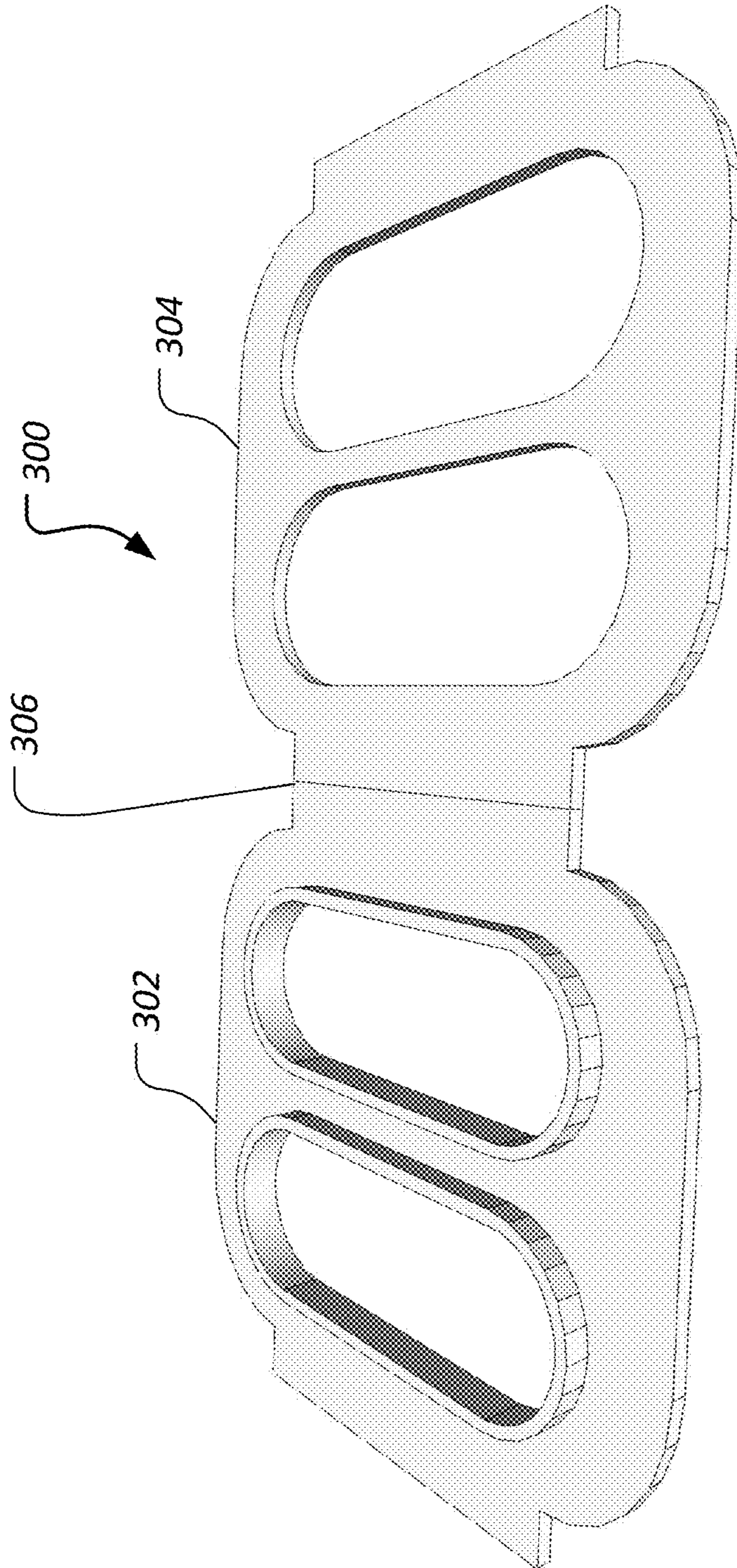


FIG. 12

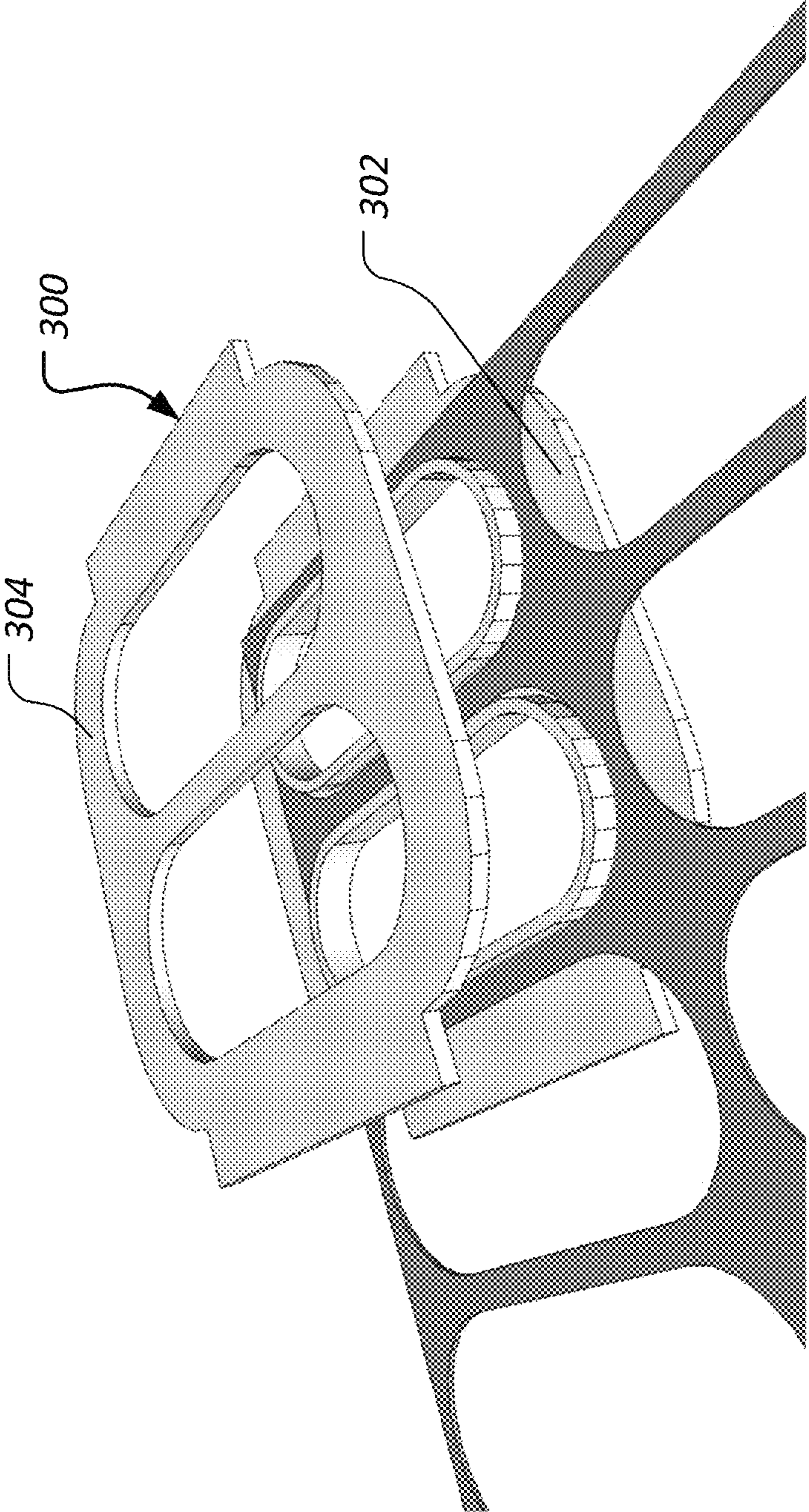


FIG. 13

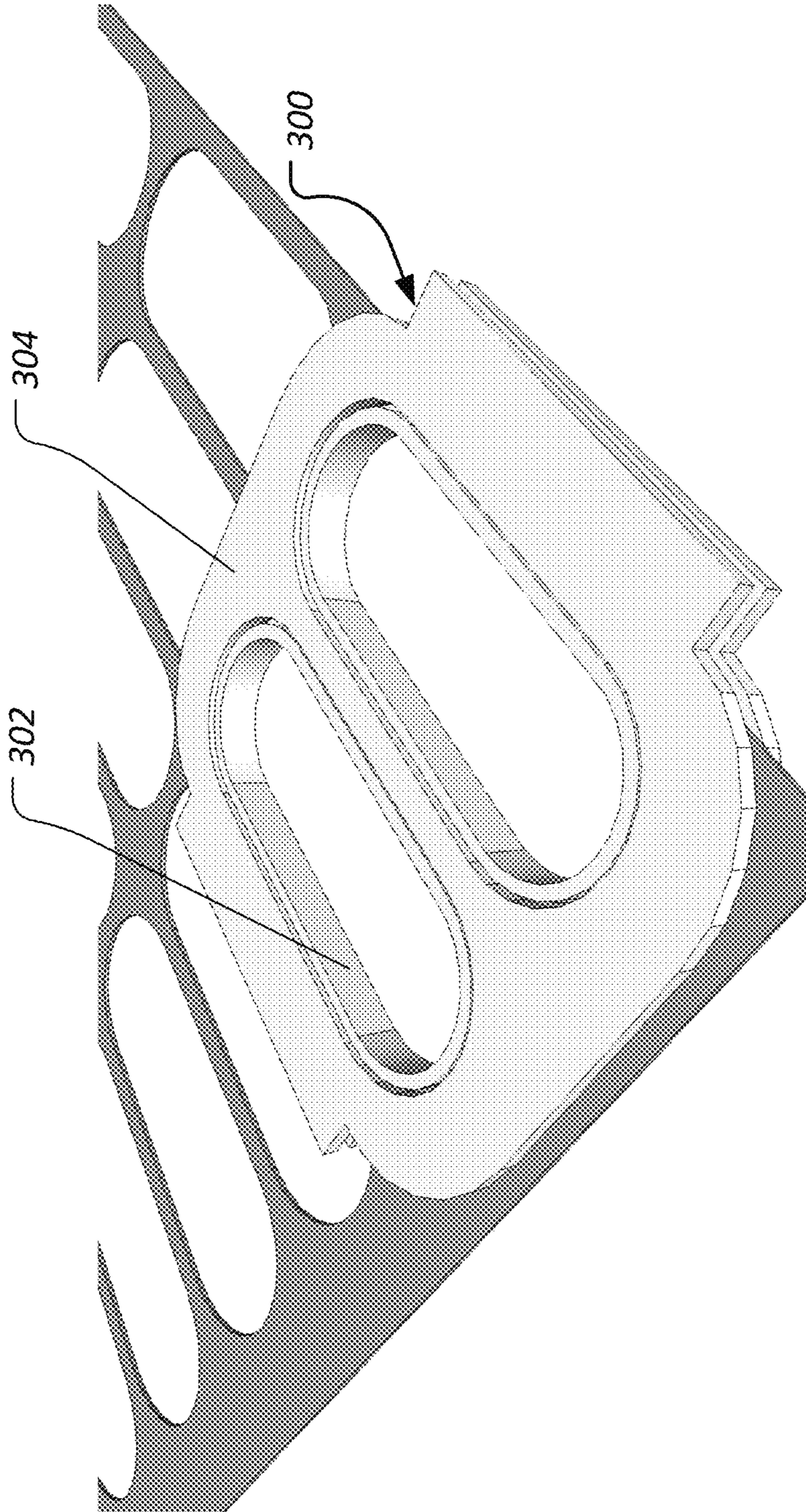


FIG. 14

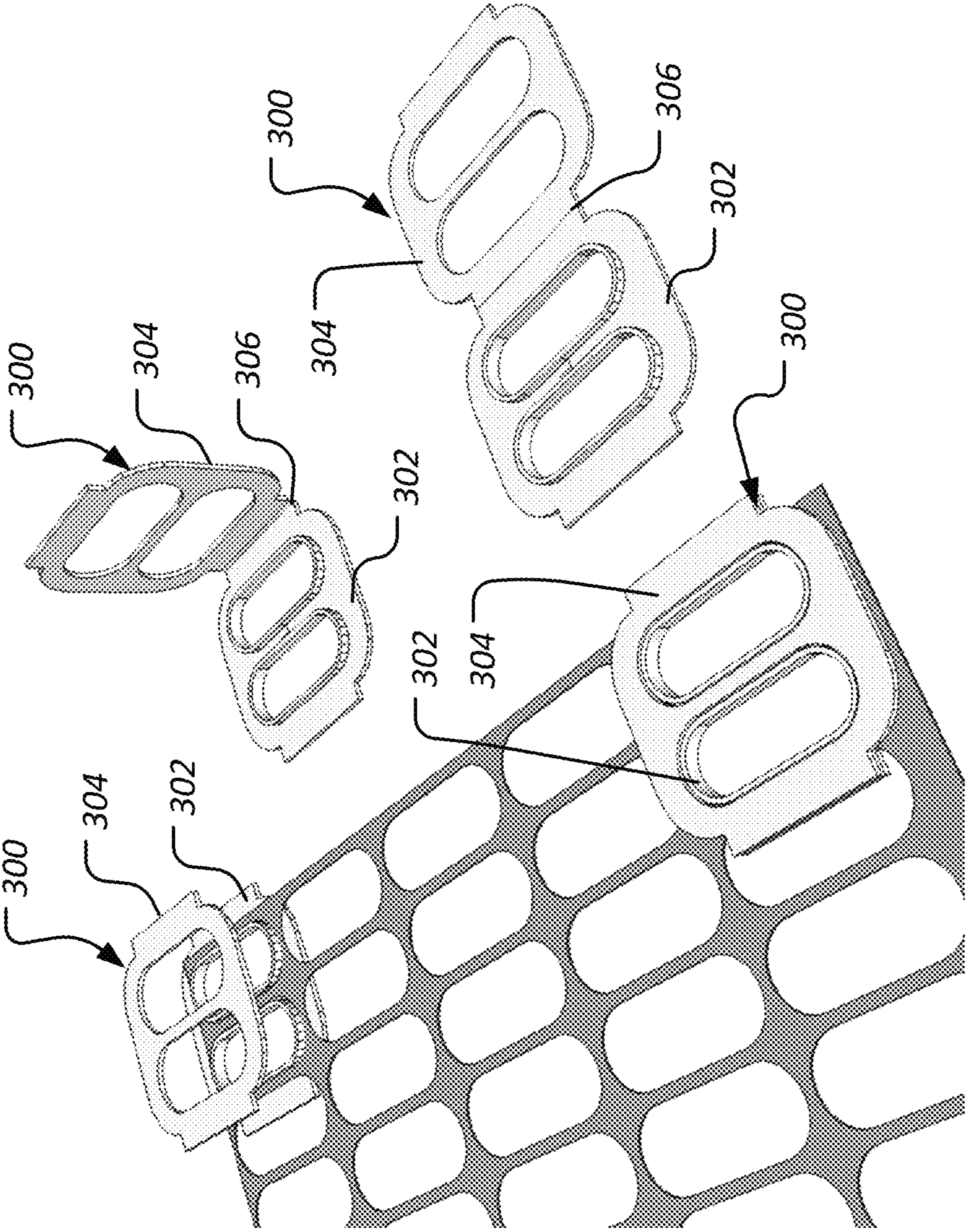


FIG. 15

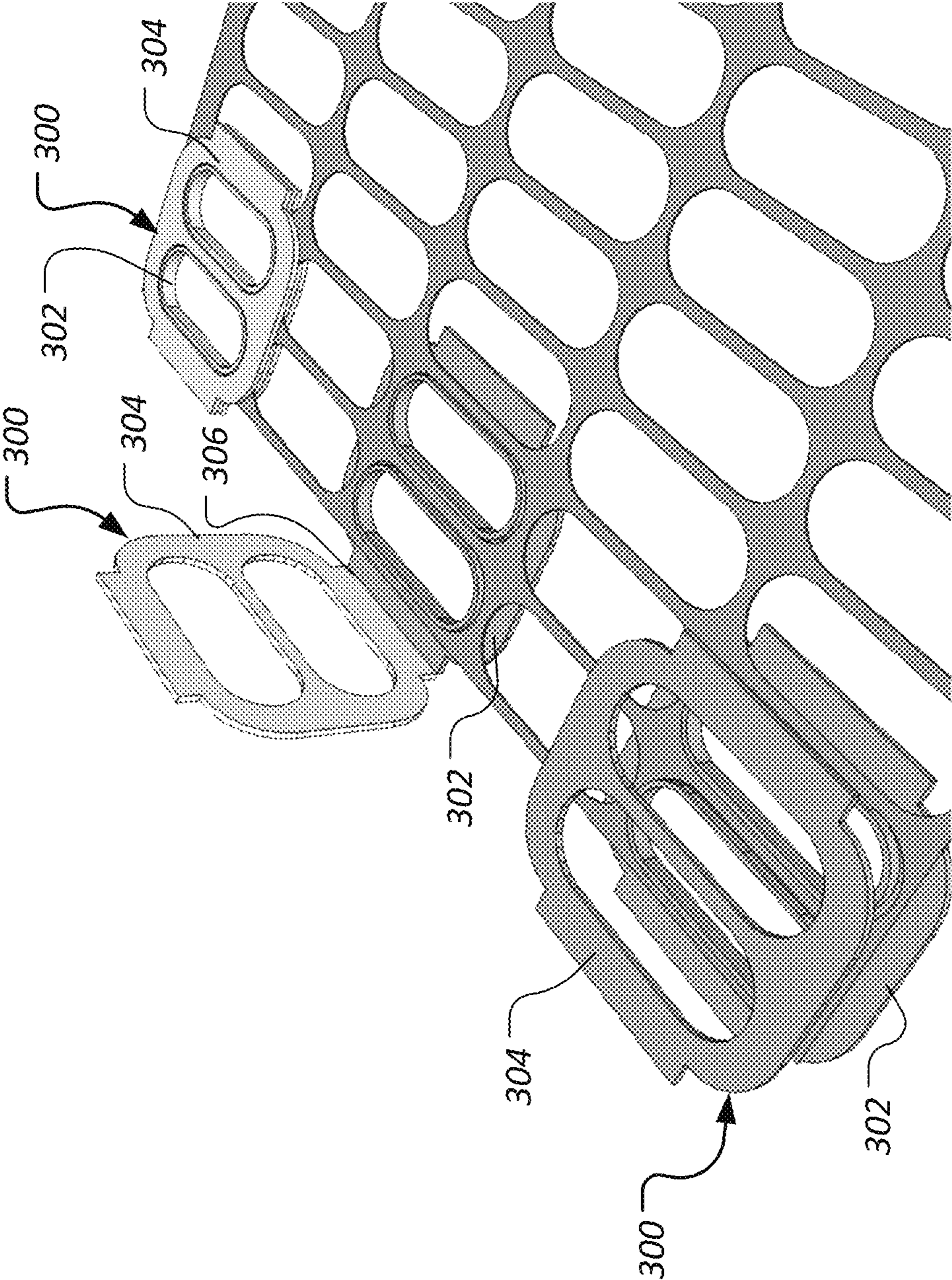
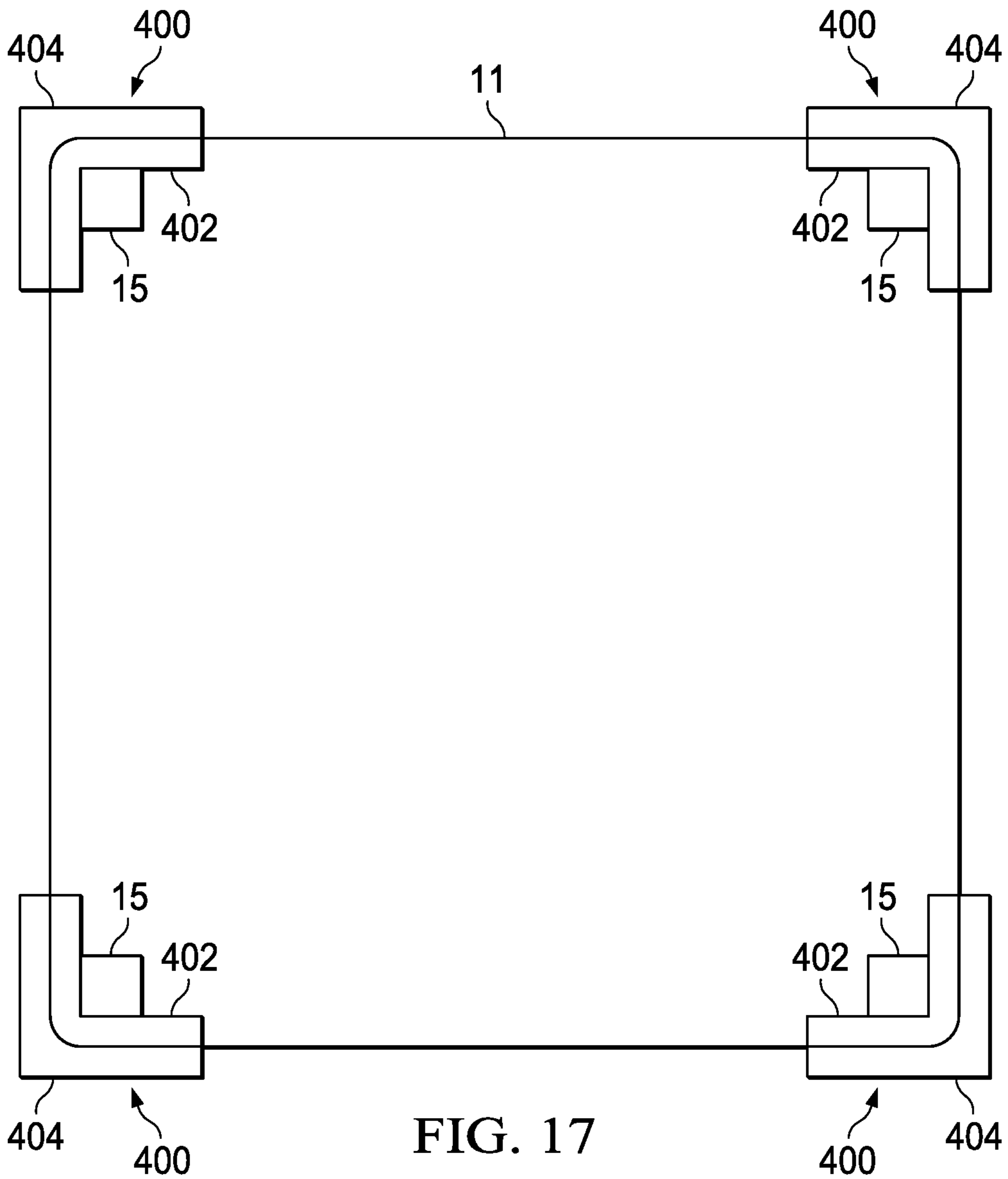


FIG. 16



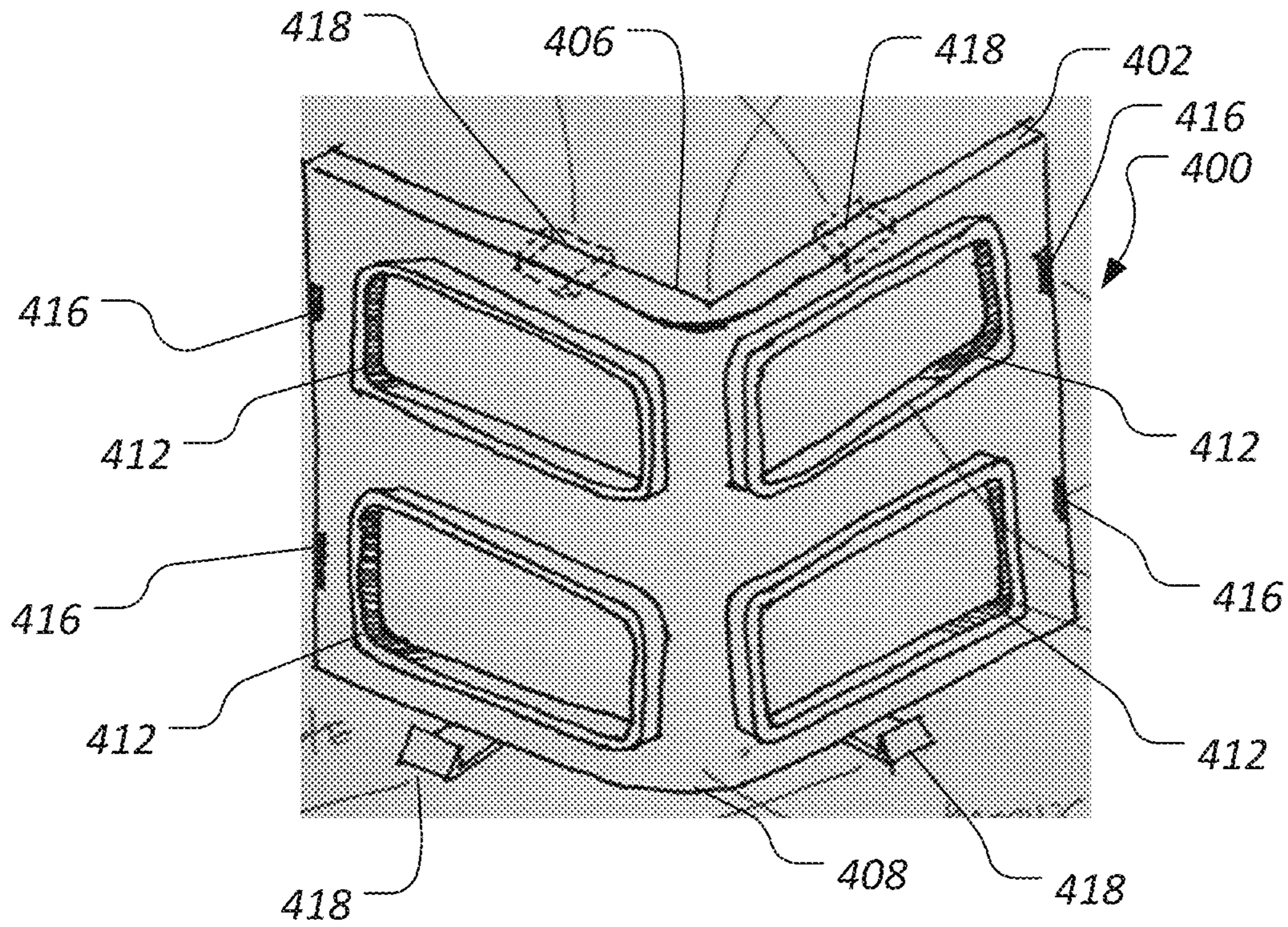


FIG. 18

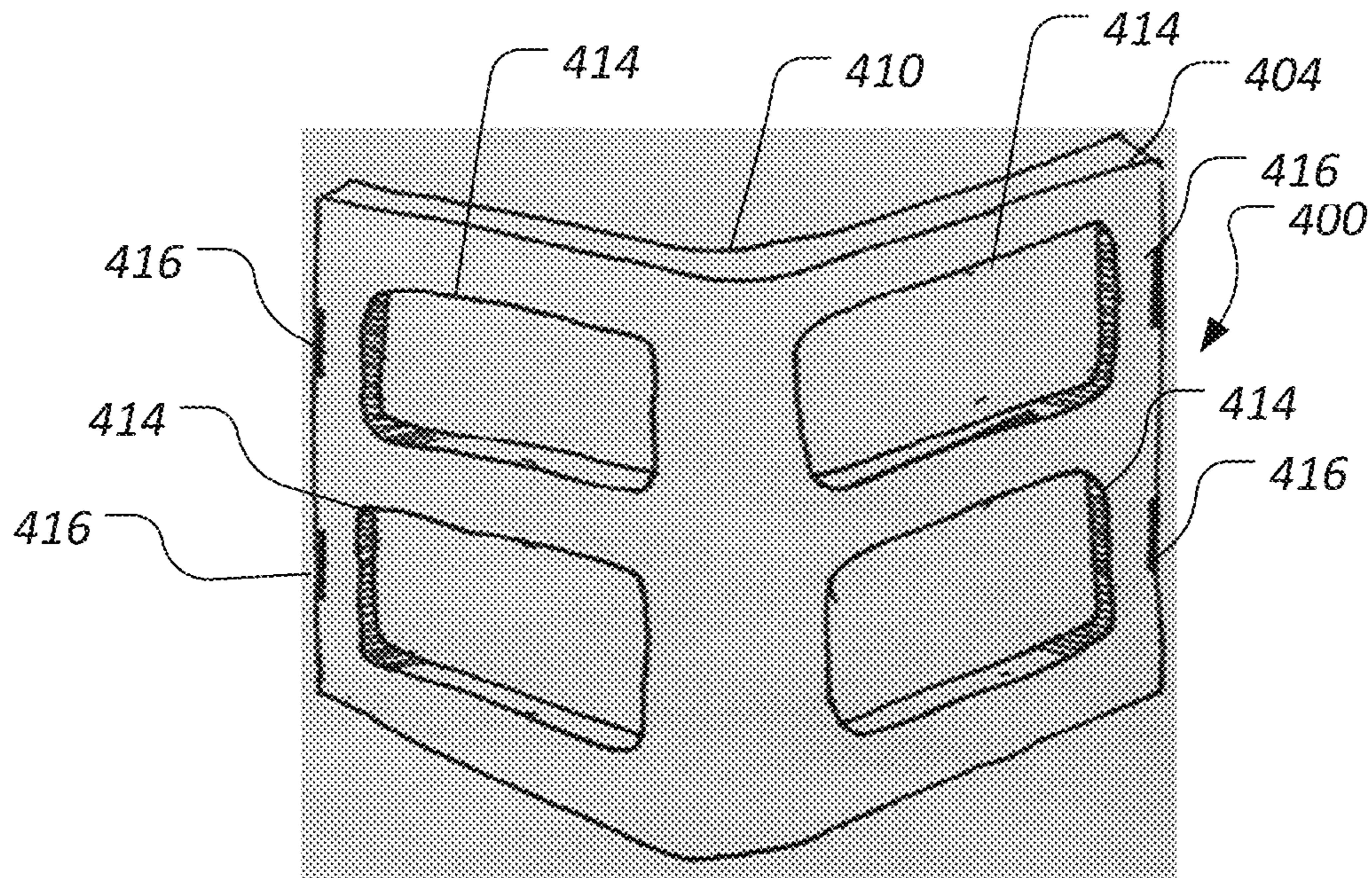
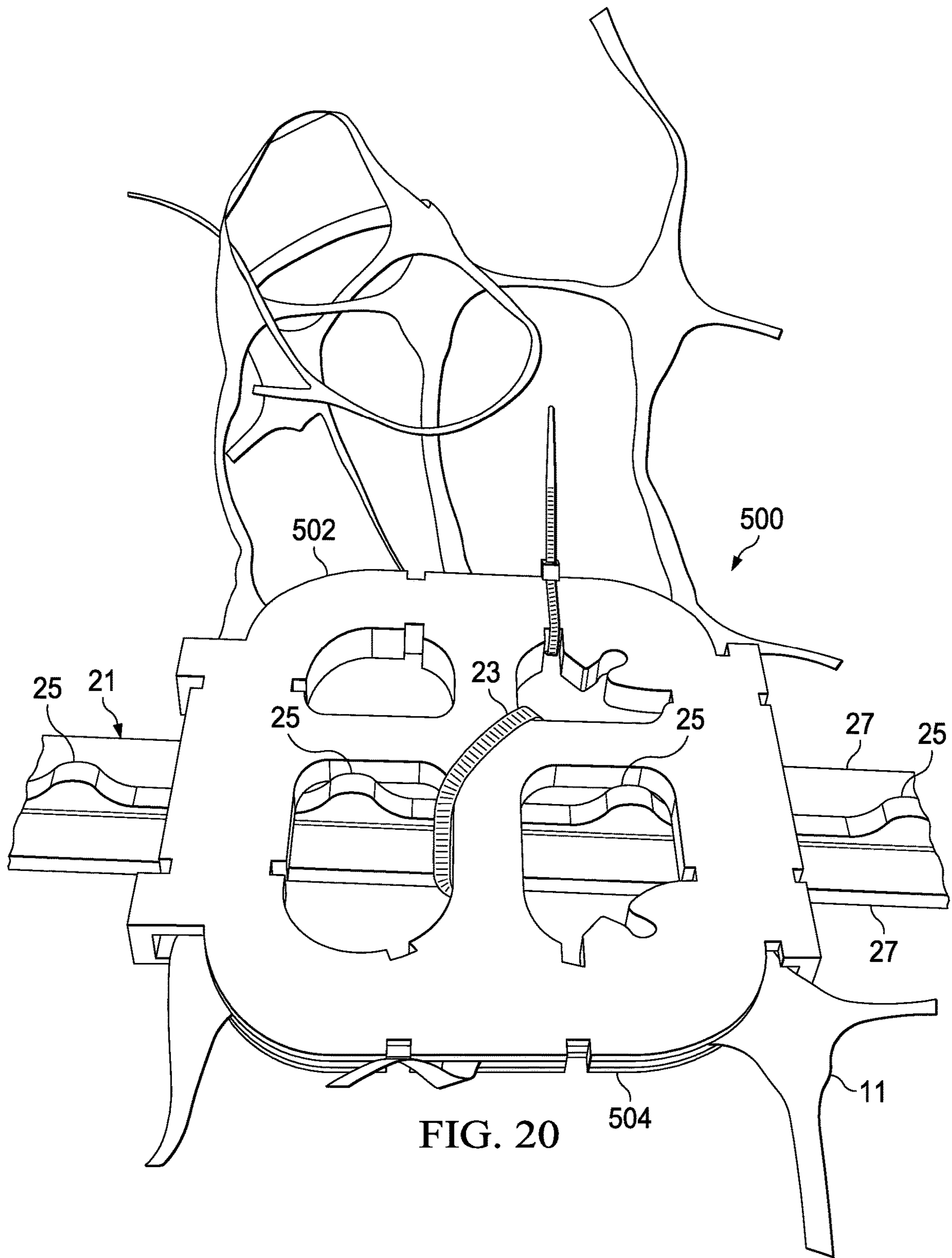


FIG. 19



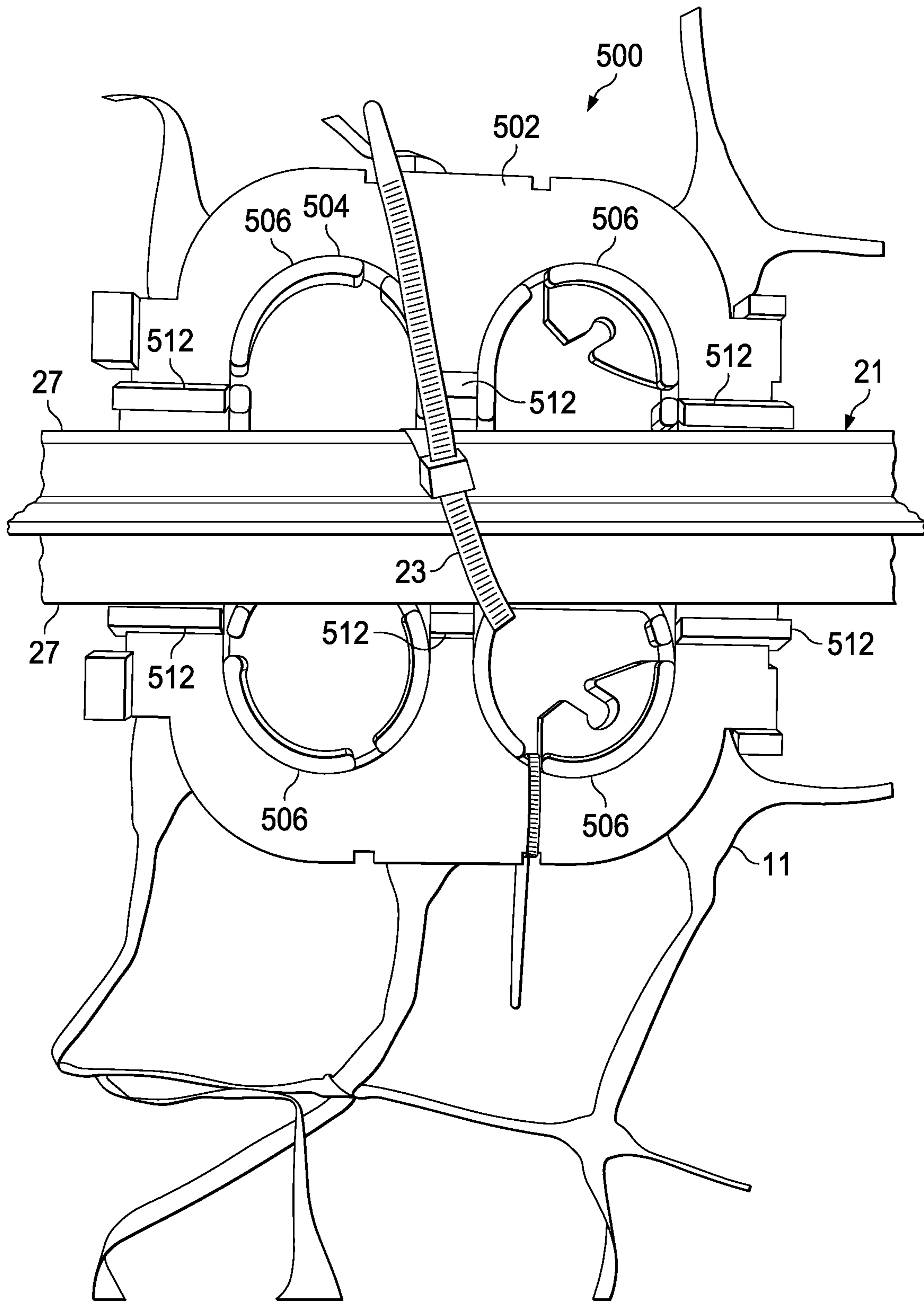
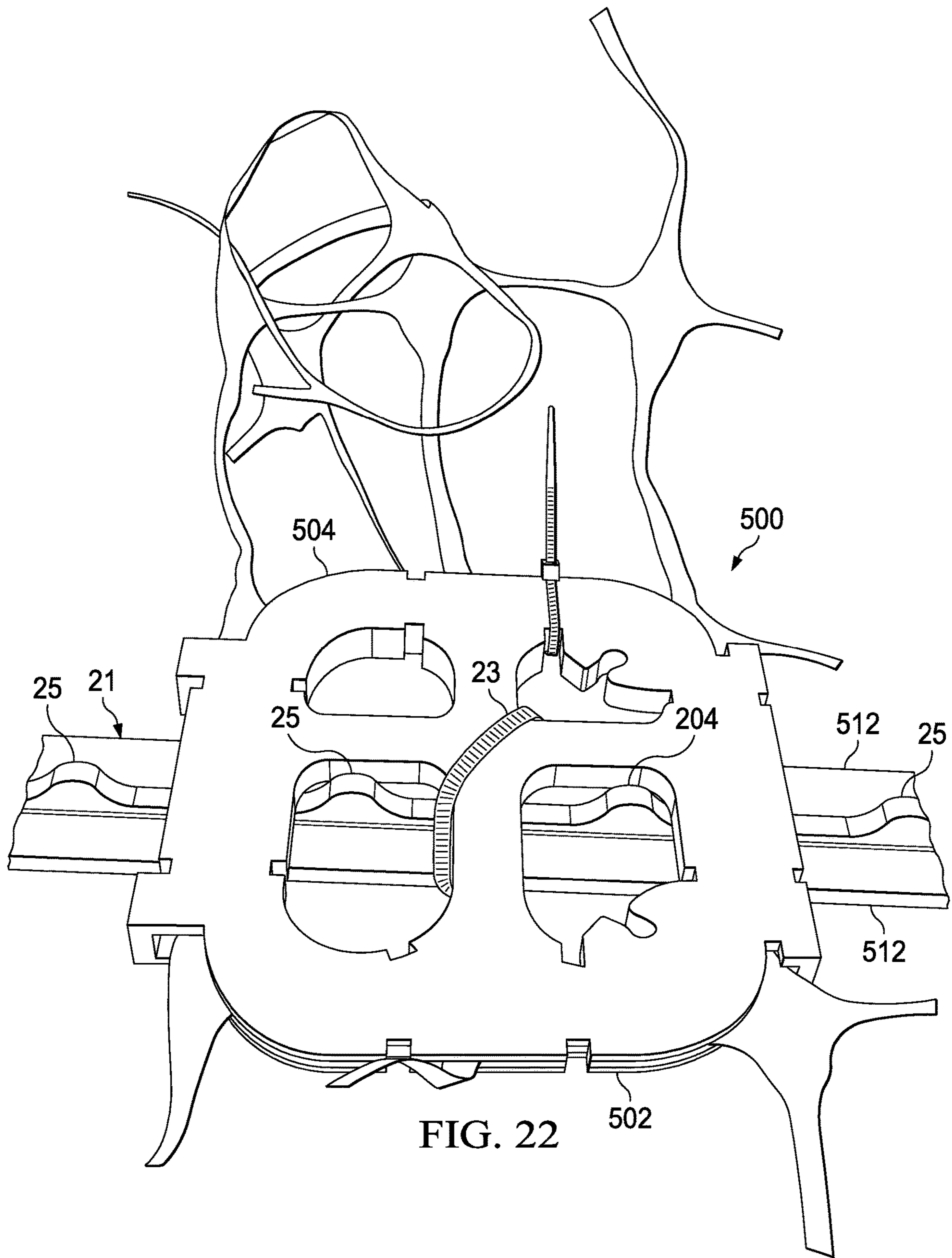


FIG. 21



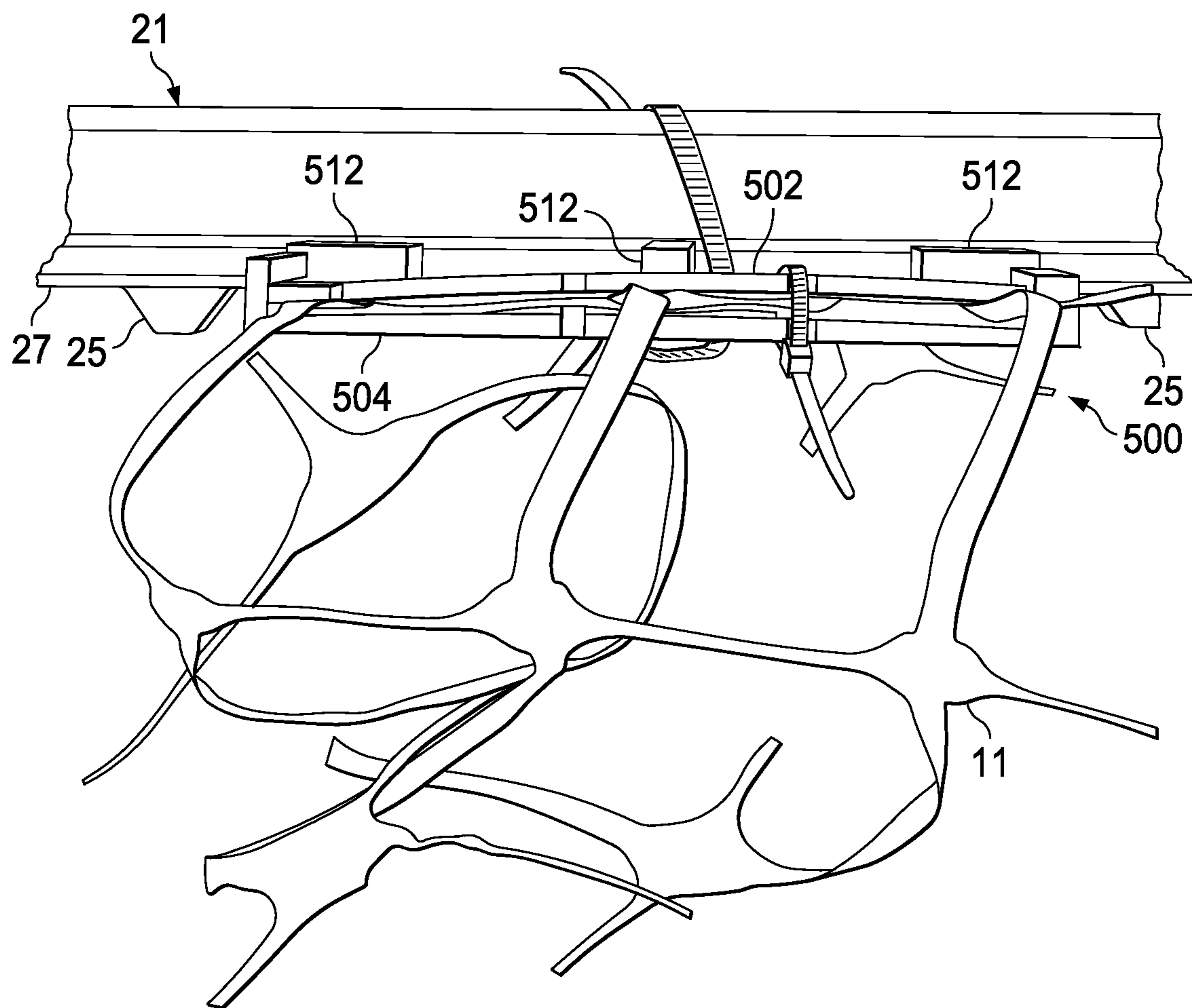


FIG. 23

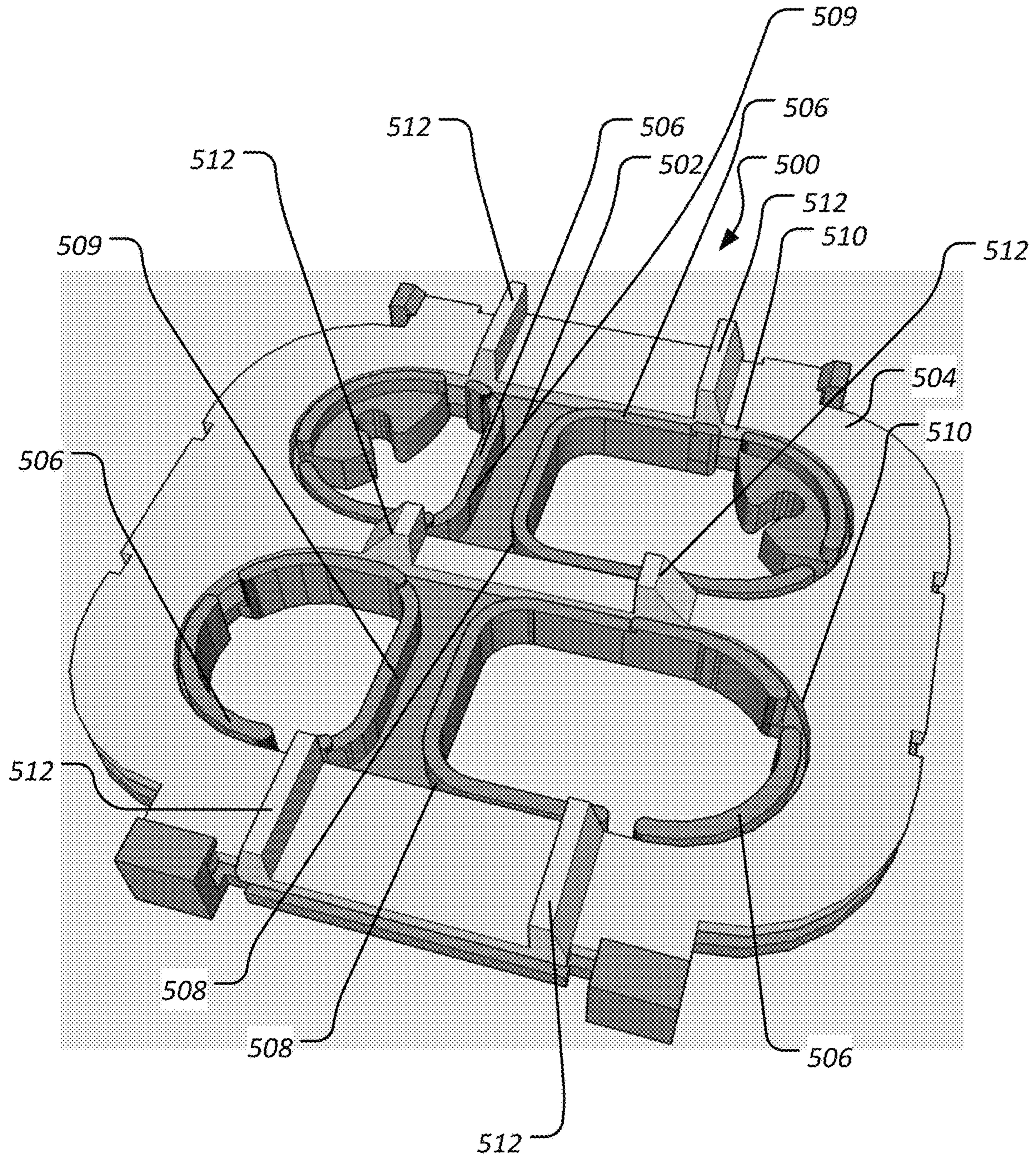
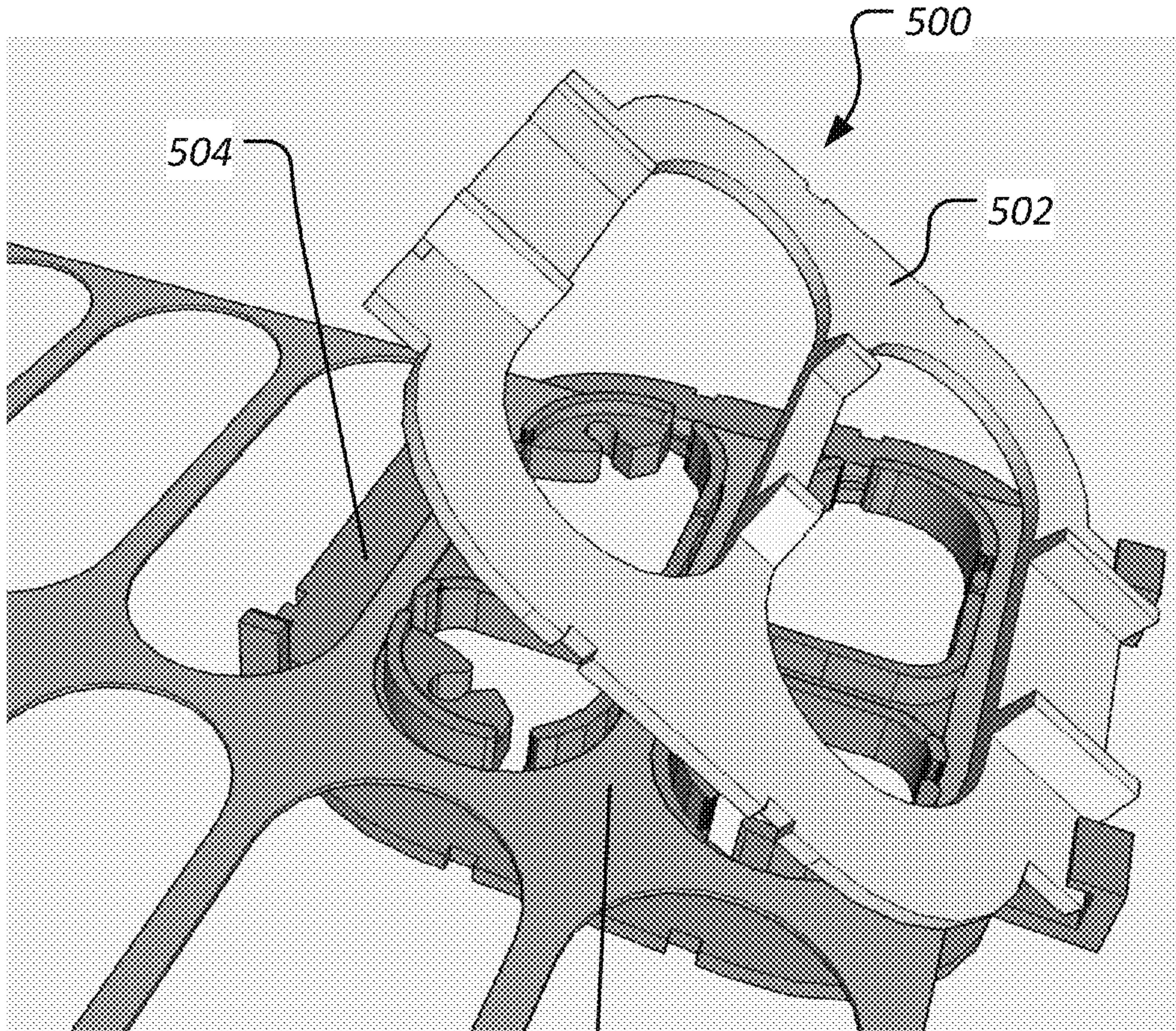


FIG. 24



11
FIG. 25

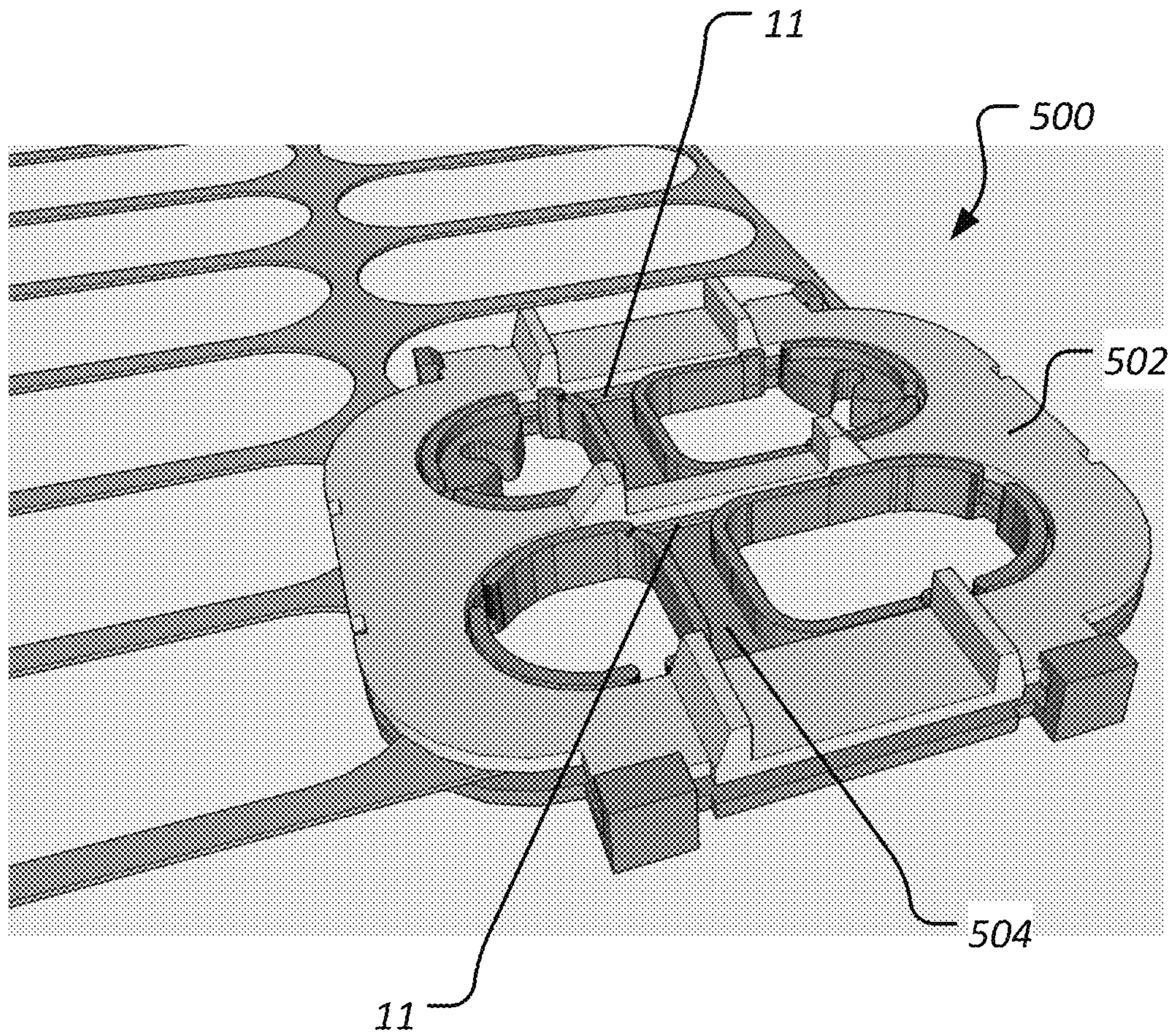


FIG. 26

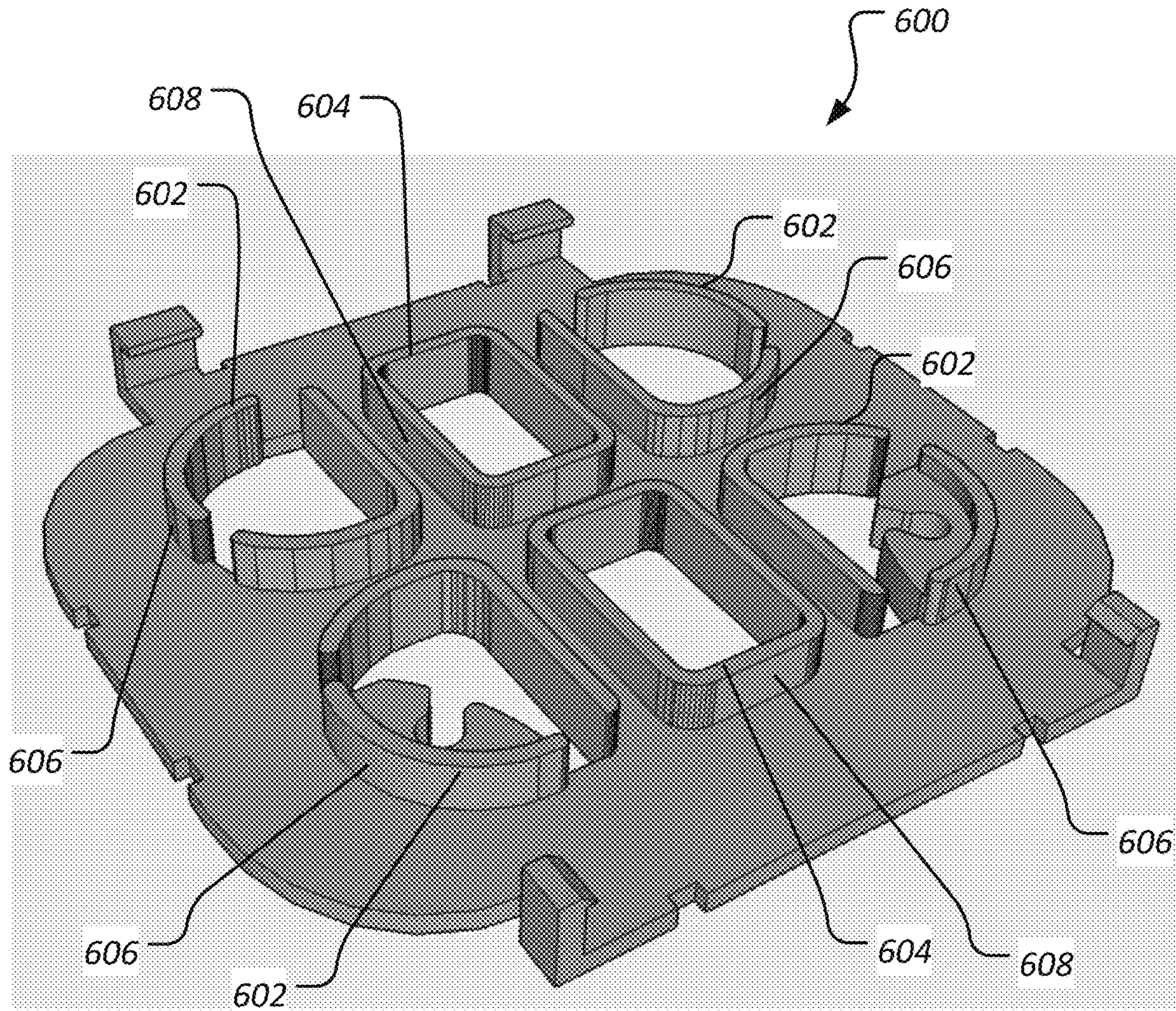


FIG. 27

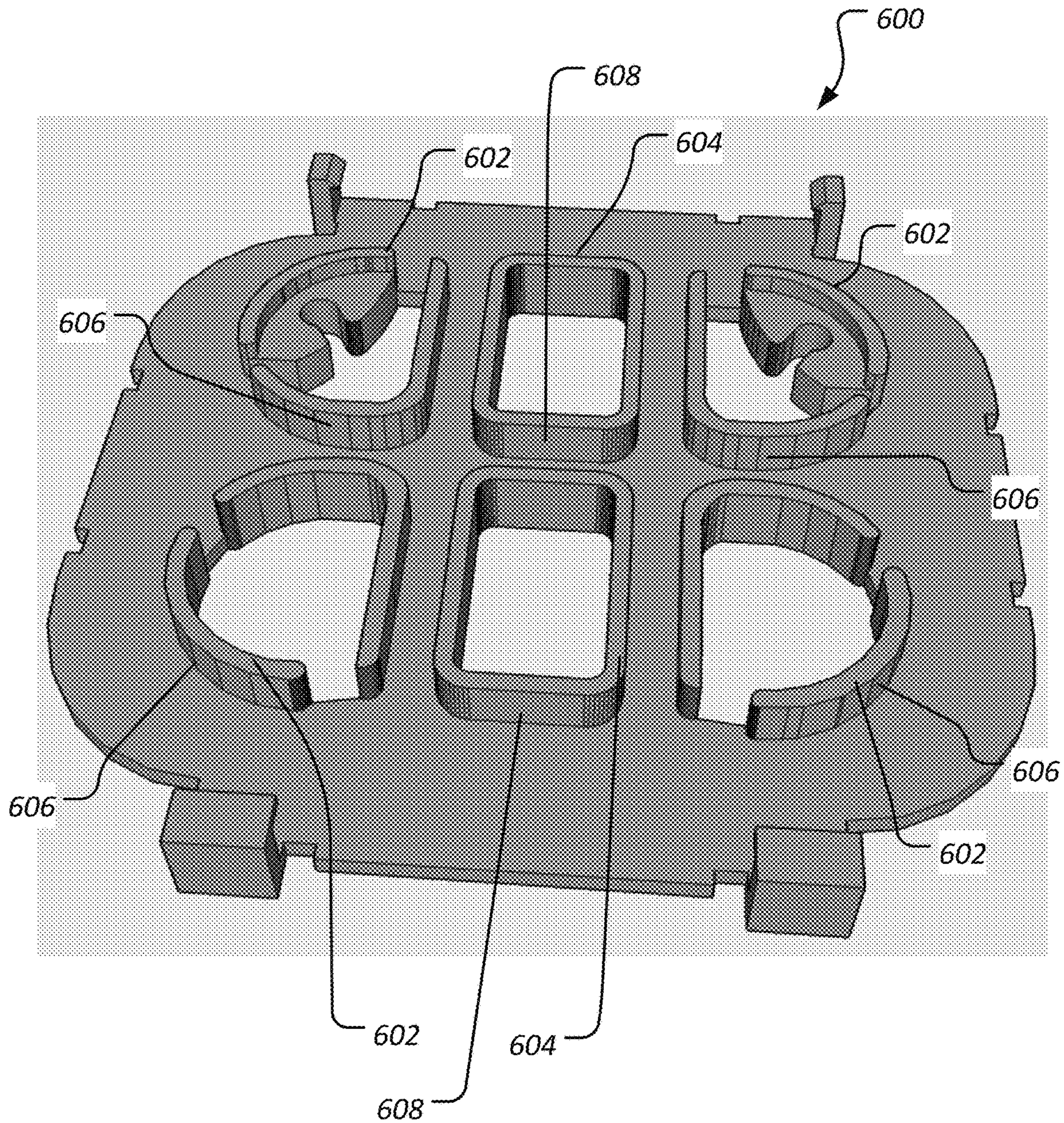


FIG. 28

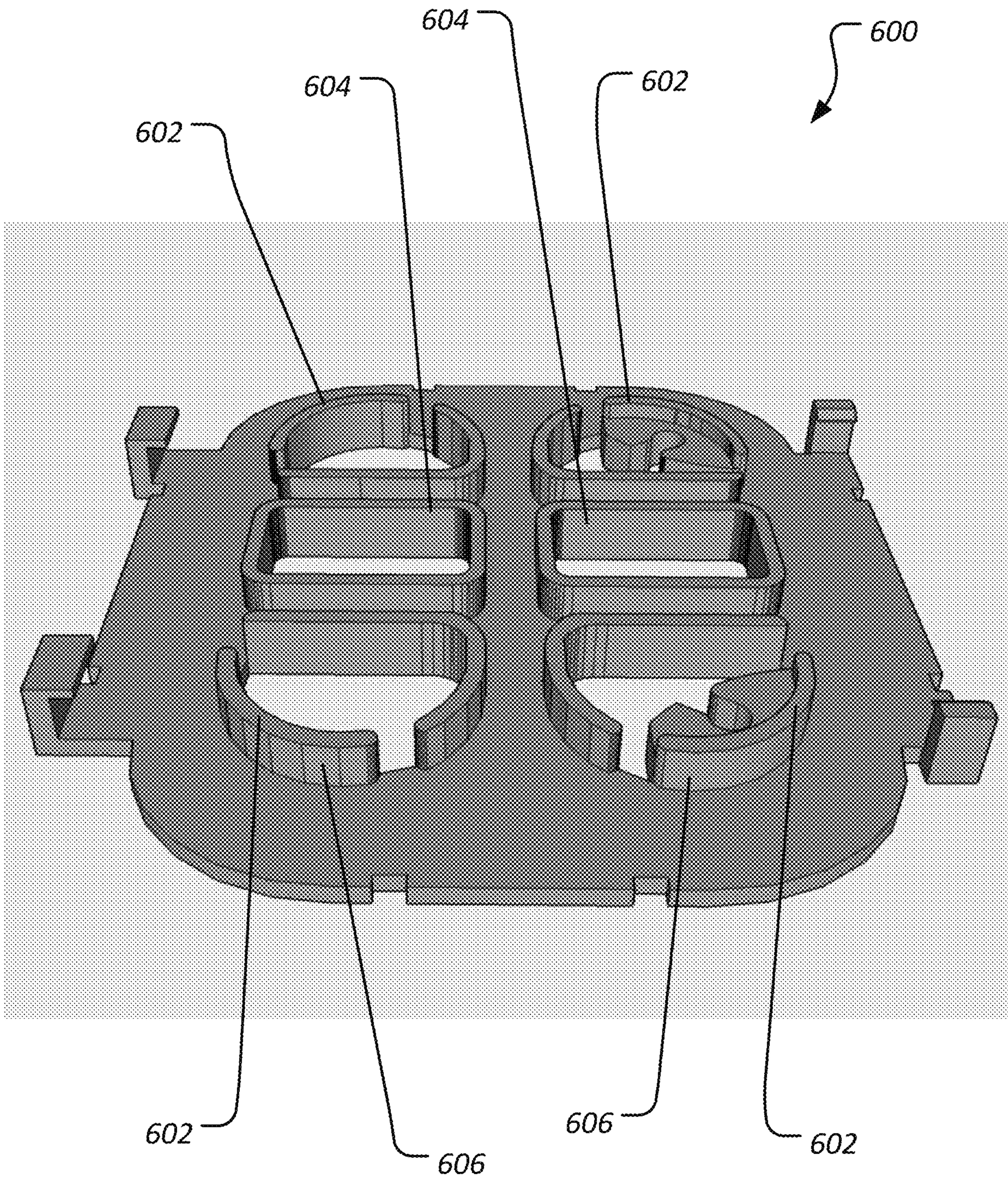


FIG. 29

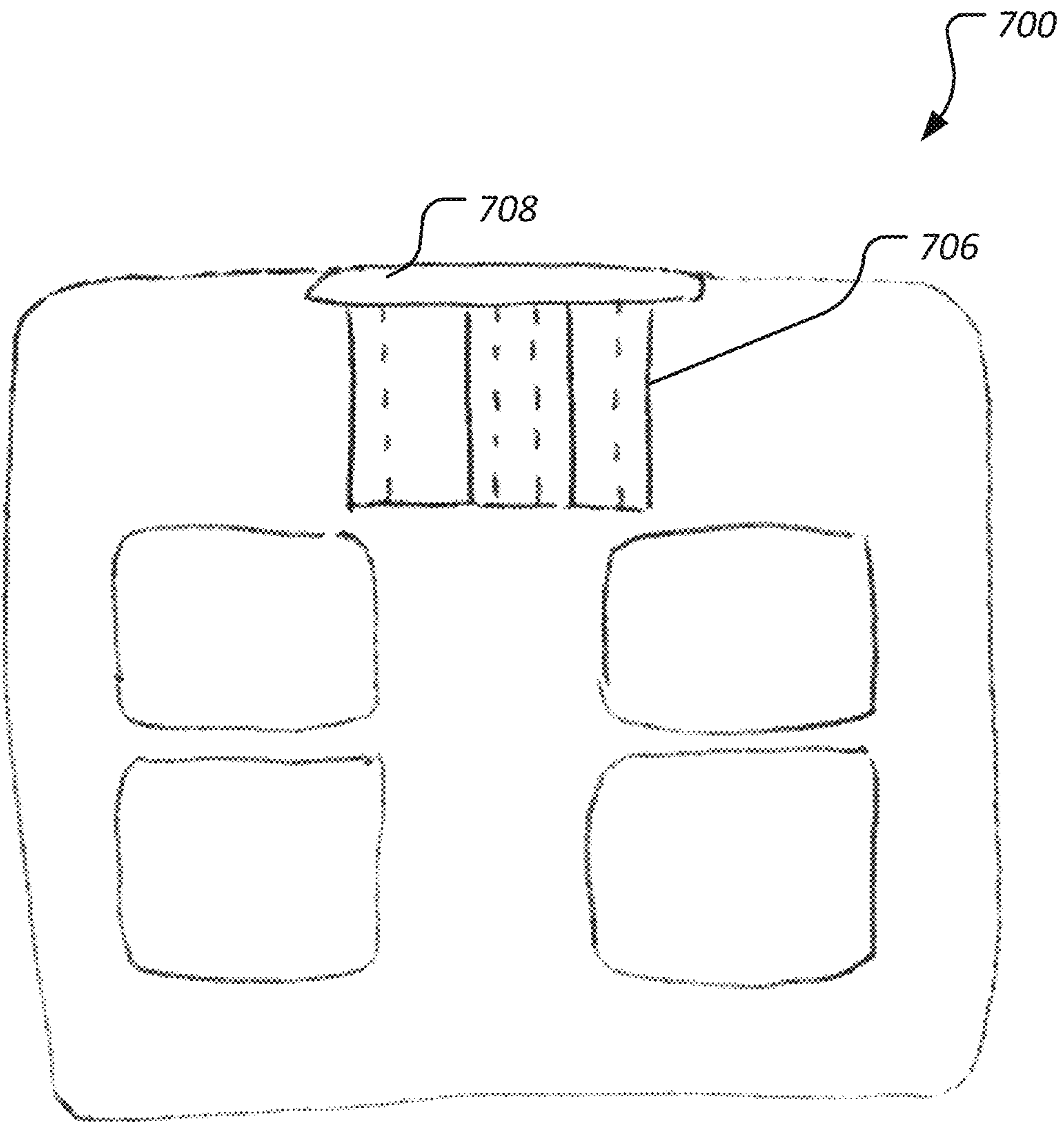


FIG. 30

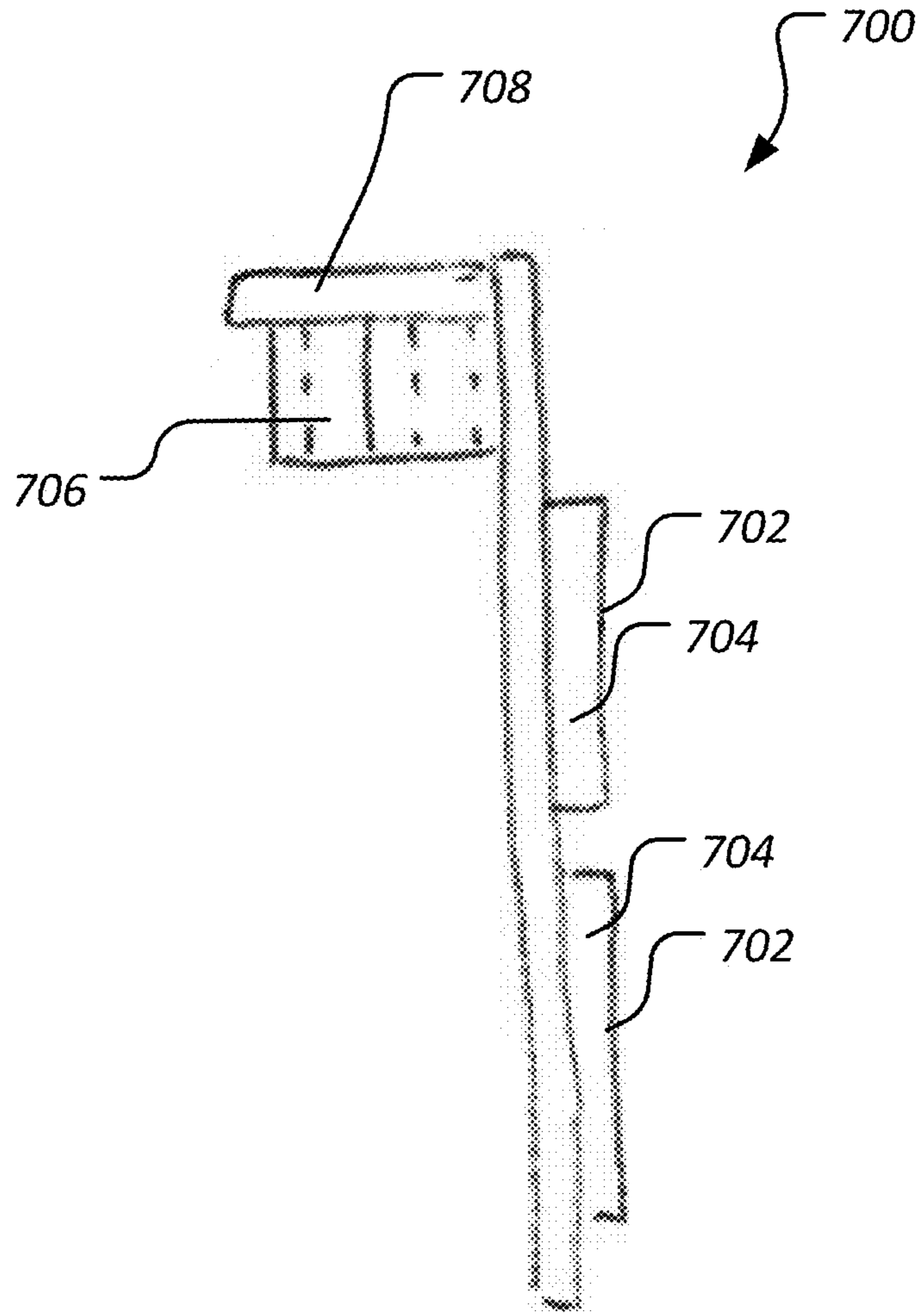


FIG. 31

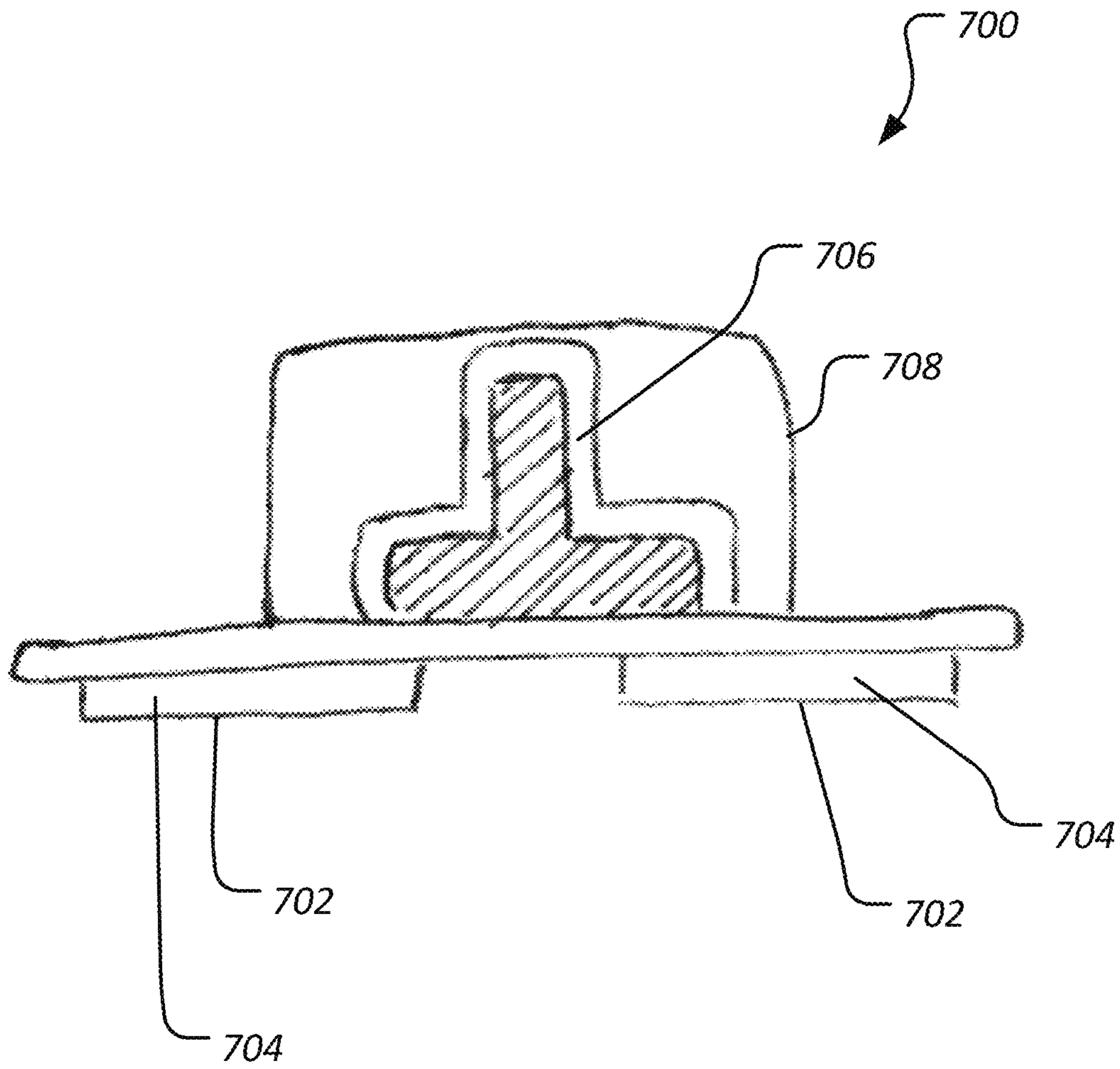


FIG. 32

1**FENCE SUPPORT SYSTEM****CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This patent application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/053,600, filed on 25 Feb. 2016 and entitled "FENCE SUPPORT SYSTEM," which claims the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/209,750, filed on 25 Aug. 2015 and entitled "FENCE SUPPORT SYSTEM," the entire content of both applications are hereby expressly incorporated by reference.

This patent application also claims the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/335,074, filed on 12 May 2016 and entitled "FENCE SUPPORT SYSTEM," the entire content of which is hereby expressly incorporated by reference.

This patent application also claims the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/385,427, filed on 9 Sep. 2016 and entitled "FENCE SUPPORT SYSTEM," the entire content of which is hereby expressly incorporated by reference.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not applicable.

REFERENCE TO A MICROFICHE APPENDIX

Not applicable.

BACKGROUND

Some flexible fences, such as, but not limited to, apertured fencing and/or safety fencing, is difficult to maintain in good condition and/or to terminate in a structurally beneficial and/or convenient manner.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an orthogonal view of four fence support systems in use with a perforated fence material, two vertical supports, and four fasteners.

FIG. 2 is a closer orthogonal view of a fence support system in use with a perforated fence material, a vertical support, and a fastener.

FIG. 3 is an orthogonal front view of a fence support system.

FIG. 4 is an orthogonal rear view of the fence support system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 5 is an orthogonal bottom view of the fence support system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 6 is an orthogonal side view of the fence support system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 7 is an oblique front view of a support unit of the fence support system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 8 is an oblique rear view of the support unit of FIG. 7.

FIG. 9 is an oblique rear view of a retainer unit of the fence support system of FIG. 3.

FIG. 10 is an oblique front view of the retainer unit of FIG. 9.

FIG. 11 is a flowchart of a method of supporting a fence.

FIG. 12 is an oblique view of another fence support system in an open configuration.

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FIG. 13 is an oblique view of a fence support system in an open configuration and in relation to an apertured safety fence.

FIG. 14 is an oblique view of a fence support system in a closed configuration and attached to an apertured safety fence.

FIG. 15 is an oblique view of a plurality of fence support systems in a variety of configurations and in relation to an apertured safety fence.

FIG. 16 is another oblique view of a plurality of fence support systems in a variety of configurations and in relation to an apertured safety fence.

FIG. 17 is an orthogonal top view of four fence support systems in use with an apertured fence material and four vertical supports.

FIG. 18 is an oblique front view of a catch unit of another fence support system.

FIG. 19 is an oblique front view of a retainer unit of the fence support system of FIG. 17.

FIGS. 20-26 show an alternative embodiment of a fence support system configured for attachment to a T-post.

FIGS. 27-29 show an alternative embodiment of a catch unit comprising D-shaped protrusions and rectangular protrusions.

FIG. 30-32 show an alternative embodiment of a catch unit comprising a post receiver.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now to FIG. 1, an orthogonal front view of portions of four fence support systems **100** are shown in use with an apertured fence material **11**. In this embodiment, the fence material **11** comprises a grid of material pieces that together define apertures **13**. In some cases, the fence material **11** may be of the sort commonly referred to as plastic security fencing, safety fencing, and the like. In alternative embodiments, the fence material **11** may comprise any other suitable shape of apertures or arrangement of spacing of apertures relative to each other so that any other suitable matrix, array, or geometric organization of apertures may be provided. In still other embodiments, the apertured fence material may be substantially a solid sheet of material with only so many apertures as necessary to complement the later described protrusions of the fence support systems **100**.

In this embodiment, the fence support systems **100** are connected to a vertical support **15**, such as, but not limited to, a wooden post, through the use of a fastener **17**. In this embodiment, the fastener comprises a nail, however, in alternative embodiments, the fastener **17** may comprise a screw, a bolt, a zip tie, a wire, or any suitable fastener, fixed point, or semi-permanently fixed point.

Referring now to FIG. 2, a closer orthogonal front view of a fence support system **100** is shown in greater detail. While the fence support system **100** comprises a catch unit **102** and a retainer unit **104**, only the catch unit **102** is shown in use with the fence material **11**. As shown, the fence support system engages four apertures **13** of the fence material **11**.

Referring now to FIGS. 3-10, a fence support system **100** is shown in greater detail. In this embodiment, each fence support system **100** comprises a catch unit **102** and a retainer unit **104**. Most generally, the catch unit **102** is configured to comprise a catch plate **106** comprising apertures **108**. In some cases, the apertures **108** may be shaped complementary to apertures **13** of fence material **11**. However, in alternative embodiments, the catch plate **106** may not comprise apertures sized to complement the apertures **13**. The catch plate **106** further comprises protrusions **110** sized,

shaped, and/or configured relative to each other to complement one or more apertures 13. In this embodiment, the protrusions 110 extend forward from a front of the catch plate 106. The protrusions 110 generally comprise a substantially continuous raised wall that closely borders and/or at least partially forms a boundary of the apertures 108. In this embodiment, two of the apertures 108 are at least partially defined and/or obstructed by a mount tab 112 comprising a mount channel 114. The mount tabs 112 generally extend toward a center of the aperture from at least one of the catch plate 106 and/or protrusions 110. The mount channel 114 is disposed so that an opening is formed in the mount tab 112 and the opening is configured to receive a fastener 17 therein. In some embodiments, the mount channel 114 may be oriented relative to a prescribed use orientation of the fence support system 100 so that the mount channels 114 generally extend in both upward and away from a center of the fence support system 100. In this embodiment, tie notches 116 of the catch unit 102 and the complementarily disposed tie notches 118 of the retainer unit 104 are provided to accept closure devices, such as, but not limited to, zip ties, wires, string, rope, and the like to provide a primary or secondary selective joinder between the catch unit 102 and the retainer unit 104. In other words, when catch unit 102 and retainer unit 104 are mated as shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, zip ties and/or other devices can be passed through geometrically opposing notches 116 and tightened to selectively lock the catch unit 102 and retainer unit 104 relative to each other. In use, the zip ties and/or other devices would typically be applied after sandwiching fence material 11 between the catch unit 102 and the retainer unit 104. In this embodiment, the catch unit 102 further comprises one or more hooks 120 protruding forward beyond the catch plate 106. The hooks 120 are generally configured to selectively engage and/or retain a portion of the retainer unit 104. In this embodiment, the hooks 120 are formed integrally with the catch plate 106 and are inherently spring biased as a function of the material elasticity of the hooks 120 and catch plate 106. In this embodiment, retainer unit 104 comprises a retainer plate 122, walls 124 for capturing a post, such as, but not limited to, a standard T-post between left-right opposing walls 124, and the previously described notches 118. The retainer unit further comprises apertures 126 configured to receive two protrusions 110 through each aperture 126. In alternative embodiments, the protrusions 110 may comprise concave channels formed on an exterior wall of the protrusions 110. In some cases, the concave channels can assist in retaining fencing material 11 relative to the protrusions. In other alternative embodiments, the protrusions may comprise features configured to allow one or more of an interference fit between the protrusions 110 and the apertures 126 and a snap fit between the protrusions 110 and the apertures 126, in some cases, thereby reducing any need for the above-mentioned hooks 120.

Referring now to FIG. 11, a flowchart of a method 200 of supporting a fence is shown. The method 200 may begin at block 202 by extending a protrusion 110 of the catch unit 102 through an aperture 13 of apertured fence material 11. The method 200 may continue at block 204 by further extending the protrusion 110 through an aperture 126 of the retainer unit. The method 200 may continue at block 206 by fixing the catch unit 102 relative to the retainer unit 104. In some embodiments, the fixing of the catch unit 102 relative to the retainer unit 104 may comprise utilizing zip ties or other devices with notches 116,118, an interference fit between the protrusion 110 and the aperture 126, and/or a

snap fit between the protrusion 110 and the aperture 126. The method 200 may continue at block 208 by vertically supporting the catch unit 102, retainer unit 104, and/or the apertured fence material 11 to a vertical support 15 or any other suitable device or structure.

Referring now to FIGS. 12-16, an alternative embodiment of a fence support system 300 is disclosed. The fence support system 300 generally comprises a catch member 302 comprising protrusions configured to complement an aperture shape of an apertured fence material. The fence support system 300 further comprises a retainer member 304 configured to complement the catch member 302 so that the protrusions of the catch member 302 can be securely received and selectively retained within apertures of the retainer member 304. In some embodiments, the protrusion of the catch member 302 can be received through the apertures of an apertured fence material and further received into the apertures of the retainer member 304 so that the apertured fence material is sandwiched between the catch member 302 and the retainer member 304. In some cases, the apertured fence material can be handled by the attached fence support system 300. In some cases, the fence support system 300 can distribute forces to the aperture fence material in a relatively more distributed manner as compared to handling the aperture fence material without a fence support system 300 applied and/or attached. Accordingly, a fence comprising the apertured fence material can last longer and be handled more conveniently. In some embodiments, the catch member 302 is movably attached to the retainer member 304 via a hinge 306. While the apertures and protrusions shown are substantially oval-shaped, in alternative embodiments, the protrusions may alternatively be formed complementary to any other shape and/or pattern of shapes configured to complement the shapes and/or patterns of apertures of apertured safety fences. In still other embodiments, the protrusions may alternatively be formed without respect to a shape and/or pattern of shapes of an apertured fence material but may nonetheless be sized relative to one or more apertures of the apertured fence material so that the protrusion can be inserted into an aperture, even if the apertured fence material must be stretched to accommodate the protrusion.

Referring now to FIGS. 17-19, an alternative embodiment of a fence support system 400 is shown. FIG. 17 shows four fence support systems 400 in use with four vertical supports 15 and apertured fence material 11. As shown, the fence support systems 400 can be utilized to provide a departure in angle or direction of fence material so that, as viewed from above, other than straight fences can be supported. As shown, the fence support systems 400 are configured to provide right angle directional changes in apertured fence material 11 captured by the fence support systems 400. In some cases, the fence support systems 400 can be utilized to effectively define an enclosed area within the bounds of the supported apertured fence material 11. The fence support system 400 is substantially similar to fence support systems 100 and 300 insofar as the manner in which apertured fence material is captured within the fence support system 400. More specifically, the fence support system 400 comprises a catch unit 402 and a retainer unit 404. The catch unit 402 generally comprises an inner profile 406 comprising a right angle interface configure for contact with box-shaped vertical supports 15. The catch unit 402 further comprises a curved radius outer profile 408 configured to interface apertured fence material 11. The retainer unit 404 comprises a curved radius inner profile 410 generally complementary to the outer profile 408. The catch unit 402 comprises

protrusions **412** shaped generally complementarily to apertures **414** of the retainer unit. The catch unit **402** and the retainer unit **404** may further comprise notches **416** and hooks **418** for selectively retaining the catch unit **402** relative to the retainer unit **404**.

Referring now to FIGS. **20-23**, a fence support system **500** is disclosed and shown as capturing fence material **11** and being secured to a T-post **21** using a zip tie fastener **23**. FIGS. **24-26** are additional views of the fence support system **500** but without being installed to a T-Post **21**. The T-post **21** comprises bumps **25** and edges **27**. The fence support system **500** generally comprises an insert member **504** comprising protrusions **506** configured to complement an aperture shape of an apertured safety fence. The fence support system **500** further comprises a clasp member **502** configured to complement the insert member **504** so that the protrusions of the insert member **504** can be securely received and selectively retained within apertures of the clasp member **502**. In some embodiments, the protrusion **506** of the insert member **504** can be received through the apertures of an apertured safety fence and further received into the oval-shaped apertures **510** of the clasp member **502** so that the apertured safety fence material **11** is sandwiched or captured between the insert member **504** and the clasp member **502**. While the apertures **510** shown are substantially oval-shaped, the protrusions **506** are segmented and form D-shaped profiles, namely, a larger D-shaped profile **508** and a smaller D-shaped profile **509**. The fence support system **500** is disclosed as being configured for attachment to a standard T-post **21** that comprises edges **27** and bumps **25**. Walls **512** are configured to bound the T-post **21** edges **27** and the bumps **25** can be received through D-shaped apertures formed by the protrusions **506**. The system **500** is configured so that when abutted against the T-post **21** with the bumps **25** received through the apertures and edges **202** bound by the walls **512**, the system **500** is substantially restrained from movement along the lateral length of the T-post **21** as a function of potential interference with the bumps **25**. Operation of the fence support system **500** is substantially similar to operation of fence support system **100**.

Referring now to FIGS. **27-29**, an alternative embodiment of an insert member **600** is shown. The insert member **600** is configured to cooperate with a clasp member substantially similar to clasp member **502**. The insert member **600** is substantially similar to the insert member **504**, but rather than comprising four D-shaped protrusions, the insert member **600** comprises four similarly sized D-shaped protrusions **602** and two substantially rectangular shaped protrusions **604**. The D-shaped protrusions **602** comprise D-shaped profiles **606** and the rectangular shaped protrusions **604** comprise rectangular shaped profiles **608**. It will be appreciated that the protrusions **602**, **604** can be somewhat segmented to allow for zip tie fasteners or other fasteners to be received through gaps formed in the protrusions **602**, **604**. While the operation of the insert member **600** is substantially similar to the operation of the insert member **504**, the space provided between adjacent protrusions **602**, **604** allows for the insert member to more easily receive fence material **11** therebetween that has a complementary configuration, pattern, and/or profile of material/apertures.

Referring now to FIGS. **30-32**, an alternative embodiment of an insert member **700** is shown. Insert member **700** is substantially similar to insert member **504** but has four substantially rectangular shaped protrusions **702** comprising rectangular profiles **704**. Insert member **700** further comprises a T-post receiver **706** configured as a concave recep-

tacle for receiving an upper end of a T-post comprising a T-shaped cross-sectional area. The T-post receiver **706** can simultaneously provide a means for mounting the insert member **700** (and/an associated clasp member such as clasp member **502**) as well as protect against impalement of people, animals, and/or other objects onto the top of the T-post. The insert member **700** further comprises a blocking plate **708** configured to assist in rebuffing potential impalements on the end of the T-post. It will be appreciated that while the insert member **700** is configured to accommodate a top end of a T-post, in alternative embodiments, an insert member **700** can be configured to receive any other shape into a post receiver or vertical support receiver configured to similarly provide a mounting means and/or an impalement protection means. In an alternative embodiment, the protrusions of the insert member **700** can comprise an at least partially D-shaped protrusion. Also, any of the insert members and/or clasp members can be modified to comprise a vertical support receiver, whether the receiver is configured to receive a T-post or other shaped post and/or vertical support.

It will be appreciated that the terms catch unit and insert member can be used substantially interchangeably herein. It will be further appreciated that the terms retainer unit and clasp member can be used substantially interchangeably. Further, at least three insert members or catch units are disclosed herein that comprise different protrusion shapes and layouts. In some embodiments, the protrusion shapes and/or layouts and/or number of protrusions can be selected to provide enhanced compatibility with fence materials comprising a variety of aperture shapes and layouts. In other words, although specific embodiments are disclosed herein, it is contemplated that any other number, shape, and/or size of protrusions can be provided on an insert member and/or catch unit to better accommodate a fence material having a specialized or different number, shape, and/or size of apertures.

In each embodiment of the fence support systems disclosed herein, at least one of the protrusions of the catch unit or insert member provides a profile comprising a relatively large radius wall surface against which fence material **11** can be pulled against. By distributing the forces along the profile, such as the curved portions of the D-shaped profiles **508**, **509**, **606**, the fence material can be loaded in tension with relatively more force without failing as compared to a much smaller contact surface area, such as, but not limited to, the outer cylindrical surface of a nail or other common fastener utilized to secure fence material **11**. In some embodiments, the fence material **11** can be gripped tightly between an insert member and an associated clasp member to distribute tension loads on the fence to the inner facing surfaces of the insert member and clasp member, thereby further increasing tension forces the fence material can withstand without failing (i.e. stretching to failure and/or ripping). In some cases, the protrusion sizes are substantially similarly sized to the size of an aperture of fence material, thereby providing large radii and/or surface area for the fence material to be pulled against without unduly stretching the fence material to accept the protrusion within the apertures of the fence material.

At least one embodiment is disclosed and variations, combinations, and/or modifications of the embodiment(s) and/or features of the embodiment(s) made by a person having ordinary skill in the art are within the scope of the disclosure. Alternative embodiments that result from combining, integrating, and/or omitting features of the embodiment(s) are also within the scope of the disclosure. Where

numerical ranges or limitations are expressly stated, such express ranges or limitations should be understood to include iterative ranges or limitations of like magnitude falling within the expressly stated ranges or limitations (e.g., from about 1 to about 10 includes, 2, 3, 4, etc.; greater than 0.10 includes 0.11, 0.12, 0.13, etc.). For example, whenever a numerical range with a lower limit, R_1 , and an upper limit, R_u , is disclosed, any number falling within the range is specifically disclosed. In particular, the following numbers within the range are specifically disclosed: $R=R_1+k*(R_u-R_1)$, wherein k is a variable ranging from 1 percent to 100 percent with a 1 percent increment, i.e., k is 1 percent, 2 percent, 3 percent, 4 percent, 5 percent, . . . 50 percent, 51 percent, 52 percent, . . . , 95 percent, 96 percent, 97 percent, 98 percent, 99 percent, or 100 percent. Moreover, any numerical range defined by two R numbers as defined in the above is also specifically disclosed. Use of the term "optionally" with respect to any element of a claim means that the element is required, or alternatively, the element is not required, both alternatives being within the scope of the claim. Use of broader terms such as comprises, includes, and having should be understood to provide support for narrower terms such as consisting of, consisting essentially of, and comprised substantially of. Accordingly, the scope of protection is not limited by the description set out above but is defined by the claims that follow, that scope including all equivalents of the subject matter of the claims. Each and every claim is incorporated as further disclosure into the specification and the claims are embodiment(s) of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A fence support system for securing a flexible apertured fence material to a T-post, comprising:
 a catch member comprising:
 a catch plate comprising a pair of parallel protrusions longitudinally extending from a first face thereof, each protrusion comprising a peripheral wall defining an aperture longitudinally extending therethrough,
 wherein the protrusions are arranged adjacent to one another such to form a combined periphery having curved end profiles configured to extend through an aperture of the flexible apertured fence material; and
 a retainer member comprising:
 a retainer plate comprising an aperture extending there-through having a shape complementary to the combined periphery formed by the adjacent protrusions and receiving the protrusions therein such to capture the flexible apertured fence material therebetween; and
 a pair of opposing post receiver walls longitudinally extending across a face of the retainer plate opposite the catch member, defining a channel transverse to the retainer member aperture for receiving a flange of the

T-post therein and such that a positioning bump on the T-post flange extends through the retainer member aperture and is received within the aperture of one of the protrusions when the protrusions are received within the retainer member aperture,
 wherein the retainer plate is secured to the catch plate to capture the flexible apertured fence material therebetween and the T-post flange is secured between the post receiver walls to secure the flexible apertured fence material to the T-post.

2. The fence support system of claim 1, wherein the protrusion extends substantially orthogonally from the catch plate.

3. The fence support system of claim 1, wherein the catch member comprises a tie notch configured to receive a closure device.

4. The fence support system of claim 1, wherein the retainer member comprises a tie notch configured for alignment with a tie notch of the catch member when the retainer member is substantially mated with the catch member.

5. A method of supporting an apertured fence material on a T-post, comprising:

providing a catch member comprising a catch plate comprising a pair of parallel protrusions longitudinally extending from a first face thereof, each protrusion comprising a peripheral wall defining an aperture longitudinally extending therethrough,

wherein the protrusions are arranged adjacent to one another such to form a combined periphery having curved end profiles configured to extend through an aperture of the fence material;

providing a retainer member comprising:

a retainer plate comprising an aperture extending there-through having a shape complementary to the combined periphery formed by the adjacent protrusions and receiving the protrusions therein such to capture the fence material therebetween; and

a pair of opposing post receiver walls longitudinally extending across a face of the retainer plate opposite the catch member, defining a channel transverse to the retainer member aperture for receiving a flange of the T-post therein and such that a positioning bump on the T-post flange extends through the retainer member aperture and is received within the aperture of one of the protrusions when the protrusions are received within the retainer member aperture;

securing the retainer plate to the catch plate to capture the fence material therebetween; and

securing the T-post flange between the post receiver walls to secure the fence material to the T-post.

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